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WITNESS my hand this
Twenty-sixth day of October 2005

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Regulation 3.2

Medvet Science Pty. Ltd.

A U S T R A L I A

Patents Act 1990

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

for the invention entitled:

"Novel Therapeutic Molecules and Uses Thereof-II"

The invention is described in the following statement:

NOVEL THERAPEUTIC MOLECULES AND USES THEREOF-II

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to novel protein molecules and to derivatives, analogues, chemical equivalents and mimetics thereof capable of modulating cellular activity and, in particular, modulating cellular activity via the modulation of signal transduction. More particularly, the present invention relates to human sphingosine kinase and to derivatives, analogues, chemical equivalents and mimetics thereof. The present invention also contemplates genetic sequences encoding said protein molecules and derivatives, analogues, chemical equivalents and mimetics thereof. The molecules of the present invention are useful in a range of therapeutic, prophylactic and diagnostic applications.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Bibliographic details of the publications referred numerically in this specification are collected at the end of the description.

Sphingosine kinase is a key regulatory enzyme in a variety of cellular responses. Its activity can affect inflammation, apoptosis and cell proliferation, and thus it is an important target for therapeutic intervention.

Sphingosine-1-phosphate is known to be an important second messenger in signal transduction [1]. It is mitogenic in various cell types [2,3] and appears to trigger a diverse range of important regulatory pathways including; prevention of ceramide-induced apoptosis [4], mobilisation of intracellular calcium by an IP_3-independant pathway, stimulation of DNA synthesis, activation of mitogen-activated protein (MAP) kinase pathway, activation of phospholipase D, and regulation of cell motility (for reviews see [1,3,5]).

Recent studies [6] have shown that sphingosine-1-phosphate is an obligatory signalling intermediate in the inflammatory response of vascular endothelial cells to tumour necrosis factor-α (TNFα). In spite of its obvious importance, very little is known of the mechanisms that control cellular sphingosine-1-phosphate levels. It is known that sphingosine-1-phosphate levels in the cell are mediated largely by its formation from sphingosine by sphingosine kinase, and to a lesser extent by its degradation by endoplasmic reticulum-associated sphingosine-1-phosphate lyase and sphingosine-1-phosphate phosphatase [3]. Basal levels of sphingosine-1-phosphate in the cell are generally low, but can increase rapidly and transiently when cells are exposed to mitogenic agents. This response appears correlated with an increase in sphingosine kinase activity in the cytosol and can be prevented by addition of the sphingosine kinase inhibitory molecules *N,N*-dimethylsphingosine and DL-*threo*-dihydrosphingosine. This indicates that sphingosine kinase is an important molecule responsible for regulating cellular sphingosine-1-phosphate levels. This places sphingosine kinase in a central and obligatory role in mediating the effects attributed to sphingosine-1-phosphate in the cell.

Accordingly, there is a need to identify and clone novel sphingosine kinase molecules to facilitate the progression towards the more sensitive control of intracellular signal transduction via, for example, the elucidation of the mechanism controlling the expression and enzymatic activity of sphingosine kinase thereby providing a platform for the development of interventional therapies to regulate the expression or activity of sphingosine kinase. In work leading up to the present invention the inventors have purified and cloned a novel sphingosine kinase molecule.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Sequence Identity Numbers (<400>x) for the nucleotide and amino acid sequences referred to in the specification are defined following the Examples.

Throughout this specification and the claims which follow, unless the context requires otherwise, the word "comprise", and variations such as "comprises" and "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or step or group of integers or steps but not

the exclusion of any other integer or step or group of integers or steps.

One aspect of the present invention provides an isolated nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding or complementary to a sequence encoding a novel sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative or mimetic of said sphingosine kinase protein.

Another aspect of the present invention provides an isolated nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding or complementary to a sequence encoding a human sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative or mimetic of said sphingosine kinase protein.

Yet another aspect of the present invention provides a nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding, or a nucleotide sequence complementary to a nucleotide sequence encoding, an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof or having at least about 45% or greater similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2.

Still another aspect of the present invention contemplates a nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative thereof or capable of hybridising to <400>1 under low stringency conditions.

Still yet another aspect of the present invention contemplates a nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative thereof, or capable of hybridising to <400>1 under low stringency conditions and which encodes an amino acid sequence corresponding to an amino acid sequence set forth in <400>2 or a sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2.

A further aspect of the present invention contemplates a nucleic acid molecule comprising a sequence of nucleotides substantially as set forth in <400>1.

Another further aspect of the present invention contemplates a genomic nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof capable of hybridising to <400>1 or a derivative thereof under low stringency conditions at 42°C.

Still another further aspect of the present invention provides a cDNA sequence comprising a sequence of nucleotides as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative or analogue thereof including a nucleotide sequence having similarity to <400>1.

Yet another further aspect of the present invention provides an amino acid sequence set forth in <400>2 or a derivative, analogue or chemical equivalent or mimetic thereof as defined above or a derivative or mimetic having an amino acid sequence of at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in the amino acid sequence as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof.

Stil yet another further aspect of the present invention is directed to an isolated protein selected from the list consisting of:

(i) A novel sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative, analogue, chemical equivalent or mimetic thereof.

(ii) A human sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative, analogue, chemical equivalent or mimetic thereof.

(iii) A protein having an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof or a sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2 or a derivative, analogue, chemical equivalent or mimetic of said protein.

(iv) A protein encoded by a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative or analogue thereof or a sequence encoding an amino acid sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2 or a derivative, analogue, chemical equivalent or mimetic of said protein.

(v) A protein encoded by a nucleic acid molecule capable of hybridising to the nucleotide sequence as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative or analogue thereof under low stringency conditions and which encodes an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof or an amino acid sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2.

(vi) A protein as defined in paragraphs (i) or (ii) or (iii) or (iv) or (v) in a homodimeric form.

(vii) A protein as defined in paragraphs (i) or (ii) or (iii) or (iv) or (v) in a heterodimeric form.

Another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method of modulating activity of sphingosine kinase in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal a modulating effective amount of an agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to increase or decrease sphingosine kinase activity.

Still another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method of modulating cellular functional activity in a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of an agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to modulate the expression of a nucleotide sequence encoding sphingosine kinase or sufficient to modulate the activity of sphingosine kinase.

Yet another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method of modulating cellular functional activity in a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase*.

Still yet another aspect of the present invention relates to a method of treating a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of an agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to modulate the expression of *sphingosine kinase* or sufficient to modulate the activity of sphingosine kinase wherein said modulation results in modulation of cellular functional activity.

A further aspect of the present invention relates to a method of treating a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* for a time and under conditions sufficient to modulate cellular functional activity.

Yet another further aspect of the present invention relates to the use of an agent capable of modulating the expression of *sphingosine kinase* or modulating the activity of sphingosine kinase in the manufacture of a medicament for the modulation of cellular functional activity.

A further aspect of the present invention relates to the use of sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* in the manufacture of a medicament for the modulation of cellular functional activity.

Still yet another aspect of the present invention relates to agents for use in modulating *sphingosine kinase* expression or sphingosine kinase activity wherein said modulation results in modulation of cellular functional activity.

Another aspect of the present invention relates to sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* for use in modulating cellular functional activity.

In a related aspect of the present invention, the mammal undergoing treatment may be a human or an animal in need of therapeutic or prophylactic treatment.

In yet another further aspect the present invention contemplates a pharmaceutical composition comprising *sphingosine kinase*, sphingosine kinase or an agent capable of modulating *sphingosine kinase* expression or sphingosine kinase activity together with one or more

pharmaceutically acceptable carriers and/or diluents. *Sphingosine kinase*, sphingosine kinase or said agent are referred to as the active ingredients.

Yet another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method for detecting sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* mRNA in a biological sample from a subject said method comprising contacting said biological sample with an antibody specific for sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* mRNA or its derivatives or homologs for a time and under conditions sufficient for an antibody-sphingosine kinase or antibody-sphingosine kinase mRNA complex to form, and then detecting said complex.

Single and three letter abbreviations used throughout the specification are defined in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Single and three letter amino acid abbreviations

Amino Acid	Three-letter Abbreviation	One-letter Symbol
Alanine	Ala	A
Arginine	Arg	R
Asparagine	Asn	N
Aspartic acid	Asp	D
Cysteine	Cys	C
Glutamine	Gln	Q
Glutamic acid	Glu	E
Glycine	Gly	G
Histidine	His	H
Isoleucine	Ile	I
Leucine	Leu	L
Lysine	Lys	K
Methionine	Met	M
Phenylalanine	Phe	F
Proline	Pro	P
Serine	Ser	S
Threonine	The	T
Tryptophan	Trp	W
Tyrosine	Tyr	Y
Valine	Val	V
Any residue	Xaa	X

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of the 'Sphingomyelin pathway'.

Figure 2 is a graphical representation of the ammonium sulphate fractionation of sphingosine kinase from human placenta. Ammonium sulphate fractionation of sphingosine kinase in the soluble fraction of the human placenta homogenate was carried out by the addition of solid ammonium sulphate to the desired concentration with gentle stirring at 4°C. Precipitated proteins were recovered by centrifugation at 20 000 g for 30 min at 4°C, redissolved in Buffer B and desalted by extensive dialysis against Buffer B.

Figure 3 is a graphical representation of anion exchange chromatography of human placenta sphingosine kinase with Q-Sepharose. The dialysed ammonium sulphate fraction containing sphingosine kinase activity was applied to a Q-Sepharose Fast Flow (Pharmacia) column (50 mm diameter, 250 ml bed volume) pre-equilibrated with Buffer A at a flow rate of 7 ml/min. Sphingosine kinase activity was eluted with a NaCl gradient of 0 to 1M and collected in 10 ml fractions. ◆ , sphingosine kinase activity; _____ , absorbance at 280 nm; - - - - , NaCl concentration. Two peaks of sphingosine kinase activity were detected and designated SKI and SKII in order of their elution from this column.

Figure 4 is a graphical representation of calmodulin affinity chromatography of human placenta sphingosine kinase I (SKI) with Calmodulin Sepharose. The Q-Sepharose FF column fractions containing highest SKI activity were combined and $CaCl_2$ and NaCl added to give final concentrations of 4 mM and 250 mM, respectively. This pooled extract was then applied to a Calmodulin Sepharose (Pharmacia) column (16 mm diameter, 10 ml bed volume) pre-equilibrated with Buffer A containing 2 mM $CaCl_2$ at a flow rate of 1 ml/min. Protein was eluted initially with Buffer A containing 4 mM EGTA, and then with Buffer A containing 4 mM EGTA and 1 M NaCl. ■ , sphingosine kinase activity; _____ , absorbance at 280 nm; - - - - , NaCl concentration.

Figure 5 is a graphical representation of anion exchange chromatography of human placenta sphingosine kinase with Mono-Q. The Calmodulin Sepharose fractions containing highest sphingosine kinase activity were pooled, desalted on a Sephadex G-25 column, and applied at a flow rate of 1 ml/min to a Mono-Q (Pharmacia) column (5 mm diameter, 1 ml bed volume) pre-equilibrated with Buffer A. Sphingosine kinase activity was eluted with a NaCl gradient of 0 to 1M in Buffer A. NaCl (to 500 mM) was immediately added to the fractions (1 ml) collected to stabilize enzyme activity. ■, sphingosine kinase activity; _____, absorbance at 280 nm; - - - -, NaCl concentration.

Figure 6 is a graphical representation of anion exchange chromatography of human placenta sphingosine kinase with ATP and Mono-Q. The Mono-Q fractions containing highest sphingosine kinase activity were pooled and desalted on a Sephadex G-25 column. ATP was then added to the pooled fractions to a final concentration of 1 mM before application at a flow rate of 1 ml/min to a Mono-Q (Pharmacia) column (5 mm diameter, 1 ml bed volume) pre-equilibrated with Buffer A containing 1 mM ATP. Sphingosine kinase activity was eluted with a NaCl gradient of 0 to 1M in Buffer A containing 1 mM ATP. NaCl (to 500 mM) was immediately added to the fractions (1 ml) collected to stabilize enzyme activity. ■, sphingosine kinase activity; _____, absorbance at 280 nm; - - - -, NaCl concentration.

Figure 7 is a graphical representation of gel filtration chromatography of human placenta sphingosine kinase with Superdex 75. The ATP-Mono-Q fractions containing highest sphingosine kinase activity were pooled and concentrated 10-fold to a final volume of 200 µl and applied at a flow rate of 0.5 ml/min to a Superdex 75 (Pharmacia) column (10 mm diameter, 20 ml bed volume) pre-equilibrated with Buffer A containing 500 mM NaCl. Sphingosine kinase activity was eluted with the same buffer and 0.5 ml fractions collected. ■, sphingosine kinase activity; _____, absorbance at 280 nm.

Figure 8 is a graphical representation of second gel filtration chromatography of human placenta sphingosine kinase with Superdex 75. The Superdex 75 fractions containing highest sphingosine kinase activity were pooled and concentrated 5-fold to a final volume of 200 µl and again applied at a flow rate of 0.5 ml/min to a Superdex 75 (Pharmacia) column (10 mm

diameter, 20 ml bed volume) pre-equilibrated with Buffer A containing 500 mM NaCl. Sphingosine kinase activity was eluted with the same buffer and 0.5 ml fractions collected. ■ , sphingosine kinase activity; _____ , absorbance at 280 nm.

Figure 9 is a photographic representation of SDS-PAGE of purified human placenta sphingosine kinase. The fraction from the second Superdex 75 column containing the highest sphingosine kinase activity was applied to SDS-PAGE with silver staining yielding a single band of 45 kDa.

Figure 10 is a schematic representation showing coverage of the human sphingosine kinase cDNA sequence by EST sequences. The TGA sequence represents the termination codon of SPHK. Note that the N-terminal sequence and a central region of SPHK coding sequence is not present in the database.

Figure 11 is a schematic representation of the strategy used to clone sphingosine kinase (SPHK) from HUVEC.

Figure 12 is a schematic representation of nucleotide (<400>1) and predicted amino acid sequence (<400>2) of SPHK. The SPHK coding region is in capital letters (nucleotides 33-1187). Lower case letters denote untranslated and vector sequence.

Figure 13 is a graphical representation of the activity of HUVEC skase over-expressed in HEK293 cells. HEK293 cells were transiently transfected with the pcDNA3 sphingosine kinase expression construct (see Fig. 11) or vector alone. At 48 hrs post-transfection cells were lysed in Buffer B and sphingosine kinase activity measured as described in Table 1.

Figure 14 is a graphical representation of the substrate specificity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Figure 15 is a graphical representation of the thermal stabilities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Figure 16 is a graphical representation of the pH stabilities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Figure 17 is a graphical representation of the effect of pH on activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Figure 18 is a graphical representation of the effect of metal ions on the activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Figure 19 is a graphical representation of the effect of phospholipids on the activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

DETAILED DECRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is predicated, in part, on the purification and cloning of a novel sphingosine kinase molecule. The identification of this novel molecule permits the identification and rational design of a range of products for use in therapy, diagnosis and antibody generation, for example for use in signal transduction. These therapeutic molecules may also act as either antagonists or agonists of sphingosine kinase function and will be useful, *inter alia*, in the modulation of cellular activation in the treatment of disease conditions characterised by unwanted cellular activity.

Accordingly, one aspect of the present invention provides an isolated nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding or complementary to a sequence encoding a novel sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative or mimetic of said sphingosine kinase protein.

Reference to "sphingosine kinase" should be understood as a reference to the molecule which is, *inter alia*, involved in the generation of sphingosine-1-phosphate during the activation of the sphingosine kinase signalling pathway. Reference to "*sphingosine kinase*" in italicised text should be understood as a reference to the sphingosine kinase nucleic acid molecule. Reference to "sphingosine kinase" in non-italicised text should be understood as a reference to the sphingosine kinase protein molecule.

More particularly, the present invention provides an isolated nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding of complementary to a sequence encoding a human sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative or mimetic of said sphingosine kinase protein.

In a preferred embodiment, the present invention provides a nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding, or a nucleotide sequence complementary to a nucleotide sequence encoding, an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof or having at least about 45% or greater

similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2.

The term "similarity" as used herein includes exact identity between compared sequences at the nucleotide or amino acid level. Where there is non-identity at the nucleotide level, "similarity" includes differences between sequences which result in different amino acids that are nevertheless related to each other at the structural, functional, biochemical and/or conformational levels. Where there is non-identity at the amino acid level, "similarity" includes amino acids that are nevertheless related to each other at the structural, functional, biochemical and/or conformational levels. The percentage similarity may be greater than 50% such as at least 70% or at least 80% or at least 90% or at least 95% or higher.

Another aspect of the present invention contemplates a nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative thereof, or capable of hybridising to <400>1 under low stringency conditions.

Reference herein to a low stringency includes and encompasses from at least about 0% v/v to at least about 15% v/v formamide and from at least about 1M to at least about 2M salt for hybridisation, and at least about 1M to at least about 2M salt for washing conditions. Alternative stringency conditions may be applied where necessary, such as medium stringency, which includes and encompasses from at least about 16% v/v to at least about 30% v/v formamide and from at least about 0.5M to at least about 0.9M salt for hybridisation, and at least about 0.5M to at least about 0.9M salt for washing conditions, or high stringency, which includes and encompasses from at least about 31% v/v to at least about 50% v/v formamide and from at least about 0.01M to at least about 0.15M salt for hybridisation, and at least about 0.01M to at least about 0.15M salt for washing conditions. Stringency may be measured using a range of temperature such as from about 40°C to about 65°C. Particularly useful stringency conditions are at 42°C. In general, washing is carried out at $T_m = 69.3 + 0.41\ (G + C)\ \%$ [19] = -12°C. However, the T_m of a duplex DNA decreases by 1°C with every increase of 1% in the number of mismatched based pairs (Bonner *et al* (1973) *J.Mol.Biol*, 81:123).

Preferably, the present invention contemplates a nucleic acid molecule or derivative or analogue thereof comprising a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative thereof or capable of hybridising to <400>1 under low stringency conditions and which encodes an amino acid sequence corresponding to an amino acid sequence set forth in <400>2 or a sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2.

More particularly, the present invention contemplates a nucleic acid molecule comprising a sequence of nucleotides substantially as set forth in <400>1.

The nucleic acid molecule according to this aspect of the present invention corresponds herein to human *sphingosine kinase*. Without limiting the present invention to any one theory or mode of action, the protein encoded by *sphingosine kinase* is a key element in the functioning of the sphingosine kinase signalling pathway. Sphingosine kinase acts to facilitate the generation of the second messenger, sphingosine-1-phosphate, and may be activated by:

(a) post-translational modifications such as phosphorylation or proteolytic cleavage;

(b) protein-protein interactions such as dimerisation, and G protein-coupled receptor mediated interactions;

(c) translocational events where the enzyme is targeted to an environment that increases catalytic activity or allows access to its substrate.

The expression product of the human *sphingosine kinase* nucleic acid molecule is human sphingosine kinase. Sphingosine kinase is defined by the amino acid sequence set forth in <400>2. The cDNA sequence for sphingosine kinase is defined by the nucleotide sequence set forth in <400>1. The nucleic acid molecule encoding sphingosine kinase is preferably a sequence of deoxyribonucleic acids such as a cDNA sequence or a genomic sequence. A genomic sequence may also comprise exons and introns. A genomic sequence may also include a promoter region or other regulatory regions.

Another aspect of the present invention contemplates a genomic nucleic acid molecule or derivative thereof capable of hybridising to <400>1 or a derivative thereof under low stringency conditions at 42°C.

Reference herein to sphingosine kinase and *sphingosine kinase* should be understood as a reference to all forms of human sphingosine kinase and *sphingosine kinase*, respectfully, including, for example, any peptide and cDNA isoforms which arise from alternative splicing of *sphingosine kinase* mRNA, mutants or polymorphic variants of *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase, the post-translation modified form of sphingosine kinase or the non-post-translation modified form of sphingosine kinase. To the extent that it is not specified, reference herein to sphingosine kinase and *sphingosine kinase* includes reference to derivatives, analogues, chemical equivalents and mimetics thereof.

The protein and/or gene is preferably from the human. However, the protein and/or gene may also be isolated from other animal or non-animal species.

Derivatives include fragments, parts, portions, mutants, variants and mimetics from natural, synthetic or recombinant sources including fusion proteins. Parts or fragments include, for example, active regions of sphingosine kinase. Derivatives may be derived from insertion, deletion or substitution of amino acids. Amino acid insertional derivatives include amino and/or carboxylic terminal fusions as well as intrasequence insertions of single or multiple amino acids. Insertional amino acid sequence variants are those in which one or more amino acid residues are introduced into a predetermined site in the protein although random insertion is also possible with suitable screening of the resulting product. Deletional variants are characterized by the removal of one or more amino acids from the sequence. Substitutional amino acid variants are those in which at least one residue in the sequence has been removed and a different residue inserted in its place. An example of substitutional amino acid variants are conservative amino acid substitutions. Conservative amino acid substitutions typically include substitutions within the following groups: glycine and alanine; valine, isoleucine and leucine; aspartic acid and glutamic acid; asparagine and glutamine; serine and threonine; lysine and arginine; and phenylalanine and tyrosine. Additions to amino acid sequences including fusions with other

peptides, polypeptides or proteins.

Chemical and functional equivalents of *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase should be understood as molecules exhibiting any one or more of the functional activities of *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase and may be derived from any source such as being chemically synthesized or identified via screening processes such as natural product screening.

The derivatives of sphingosine kinase include fragments having particular epitopes or parts of the entire sphingosine kinase protein fused to peptides, polypeptides or other proteinaceous or non-proteinaceous molecules.

Analogues of sphingosine kinase contemplated herein include, but are not limited to, modification to side chains, incorporating of unnatural amino acids and/or their derivatives during peptide, polypeptide or protein synthesis and the use of crosslinkers and other methods which impose conformational constraints on the proteinaceous molecules or their analogues.

Derivatives of nucleic acid sequences may similarly be derived from single or multiple nucleotide substitutions, deletions and/or additions including fusion with other nucleic acid molecules. The derivatives of the nucleic acid molecules of the present invention include oligonucleotides, PCR primers, antisense molecules, molecules suitable for use in cosuppression and fusion of nucleic acid molecules. Derivatives of nucleic acid sequences also include degenerate variants.

Examples of side chain modifications contemplated by the present invention include modifications of amino groups such as by reductive alkylation by reaction with an aldehyde followed by reduction with $NaBH_4$; amidination with methylacetimidate; acylation with acetic anhydride; carbamoylation of amino groups with cyanate; trinitrobenzylation of amino groups with 2, 4, 6-trinitrobenzene sulphonic acid (TNBS); acylation of amino groups with succinic anhydride and tetrahydrophthalic anhydride; and pyridoxylation of lysine with pyridoxal-5-phosphate followed by reduction with $NaBH_4$.

The guanidine group of arginine residues may be modified by the formation of heterocyclic condensation products with reagents such as 2,3-butanedione, phenylglyoxal and glyoxal.

The carboxyl group may be modified by carbodiimide activation *via* O-acylisourea formation followed by subsequent derivitisation, for example, to a corresponding amide.

Sulphydryl groups may be modified by methods such as carboxymethylation with iodoacetic acid or iodoacetamide; performic acid oxidation to cysteic acid; formation of a mixed disulphides with other thiol compounds; reaction with maleimide, maleic anhydride or other substituted maleimide; formation of mercurial derivatives using 4-chloromercuribenzoate, 4-chloromercuriphenylsulphonic acid, phenylmercury chloride, 2-chloromercuri-4-nitrophenol and other mercurials; carbamoylation with cyanate at alkaline pH.

Tryptophan residues may be modified by, for example, oxidation with N-bromosuccinimide or alkylation of the indole ring with 2-hydroxy-5-nitrobenzyl bromide or sulphenyl halides. Tyrosine residues on the other hand, may be altered by nitration with tetranitromethane to form a 3-nitrotyrosine derivative.

Modification of the imidazole ring of a histidine residue may be accomplished by alkylation with iodoacetic acid derivatives or N-carboethoxylation with diethylpyrocarbonate.

Examples of incorporating unnatural amino acids and derivatives during protein synthesis include, but are not limited to, use of norleucine, 4-amino butyric acid, 4-amino-3-hydroxy-5-phenylpentanoic acid, 6-aminohexanoic acid, t-butylglycine, norvaline, phenylglycine, ornithine, sarcosine, 4-amino-3-hydroxy-6-methylheptanoic acid, 2-thienyl alanine and/or D-isomers of amino acids. A list of unnatural amino acid contemplated herein is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Non-conventional amino acid	Code	Non-conventional amino acid	Code
α-aminobutyric acid	Abu	L-N-methylalanine	Nmala
α-amino-α-methylbutyrate	Mgabu	L-N-methylarginine	Nmarg
aminocyclopropane-carboxylate	Cpro	L-N-methylasparagine	Nmasn
		L-N-methylaspartic acid	Nmasp
aminoisobutyric acid	Aib	L-N-methylcysteine	Nmcys
aminonorbornyl-carboxylate	Norb	L-N-methylglutamine	Nmgln
		L-N-methylglutamic acid	Nmglu
cyclohexylalanine	Chexa	L-N-methylhistidine	Nmhis
cyclopentylalanine	Cpen	L-N-methylisolleucine	Nmile
D-alanine	Dal	L-N-methylleucine	Nmleu
D-arginine	Darg	L-N-methyllysine	Nmlys
D-aspartic acid	Dasp	L-N-methylmethionine	Nmmet
D-cysteine	Dcys	L-N-methylnorleucine	Nmnle
D-glutamine	Dgln	L-N-methylnorvaline	Nmnva
D-glutamic acid	Dglu	L-N-methylornithine	Nmorn
D-histidine	Dhis	L-N-methylphenylalanine	Nmphe
D-isoleucine	Dile	L-N-methylproline	Nmpro
D-leucine	Dleu	L-N-methylserine	Nmser
D-lysine	Dlys	L-N-methylthreonine	Nmthr
D-methionine	Dmet	L-N-methyltryptophan	Nmtrp
D-ornithine	Dorn	L-N-methyltyrosine	Nmtyr
D-phenylalanine	Dphe	L-N-methylvaline	Nmval
D-proline	Dpro	L-N-methylethylglycine	Nmetg
D-serine	Dser	L-N-methyl-t-butylglycine	Nmtbug
D-threonine	Dthr	L-norleucine	Nle
D-tryptophan	Dtrp	L-norvaline	Nva
D-tyrosine	Dtyr	α-methyl-aminoisobutyrate	Maib
D-valine	Dval	α-methyl-γ-aminobutyrate	Mgabu

D-α-methylalanine	Dmala	α-methylcyclohexylalanine	Mchexa
D-α-methylarginine	Dmarg	α-methylcylcopentylalanine	Mcpen
D-α-methylasparagine	Dmasn	α-methyl-α-napthylalanine	Manap
D-α-methylaspartate	Dmasp	α-methylpenicillamine	Mpen
D-α-methylcysteine	Dmcys	N-(4-aminobutyl)glycine	Nglu
D-α-methylglutamine	Dmgln	N-(2-aminoethyl)glycine	Naeg
D-α-methylhistidine	Dmhis	N-(3-aminopropyl)glycine	Norn
D-α-methylisoleucine	Dmile	N-amino-α-methylbutyrate	Nmaabu
D-α-methylleucine	Dmleu	α-napthylalanine	Anap
D-α-methyllysine	Dmlys	N-benzylglycine	Nphe
D-α-methylmethionine	Dmmet	N-(2-carbamylethyl)glycine	Ngln
D-α-methylornithine	Dmorn	N-(carbamylmethyl)glycine	Nasn
D-α-methylphenylalanine	Dmphe	N-(2-carboxyethyl)glycine	Nglu
D-α-methylproline	Dmpro	N-(carboxymethyl)glycine	Nasp
D-α-methylserine	Dmser	N-cyclobutylglycine	Ncbut
D-α-methylthreonine	Dmthr	N-cycloheptylglycine	Nchep
D-α-methyltryptophan	Dmtrp	N-cyclohexylglycine	Nchex
D-α-methyltyrosine	Dmty	N-cyclodecylglycine	Ncdec
D-α-methylvaline	Dmval	N-cylcododecylglycine	Ncdod
D-N-methylalanine	Dnmala	N-cyclooctylglycine	Ncoct
D-N-methylarginine	Dnmarg	N-cyclopropylglycine	Ncpro
D-N-methylasparagine	Dnmasn	N-cycloundecylglycine	Ncund
D-N-methylaspartate	Dnmasp	N-(2,2-diphenylethyl)glycine	Nbhm
D-N-methylcysteine	Dnmcys	N-(3,3-diphenylpropyl)glycine	Nbhe
D-N-methylglutamine	Dnmgln	N-(3-guanidinopropyl)glycine	Narg
D-N-methylglutamate	Dnmglu	N-(1-hydroxyethyl)glycine	Nthr
D-N-methylhistidine	Dnmhis	N-(hydroxyethyl))glycine	Nser
D-N-methylisoleucine	Dnmile	N-(imidazolylethyl))glycine	Nhis
D-N-methylleucine	Dnmleu	N-(3-indolylyethyl)glycine	Nhtrp
D-N-methyllysine	Dnmlys	N-methyl-γ-aminobutyrate	Nmgabu
N-methylcyclohexylalanine	Nmchexa	D-N-methylmethionine	Dnmmet
D-N-methylornithine	Dnmorn	N-methylcyclopentylalanine	Nmcpen
N-methylglycine	Nala	D-N-methylphenylalanine	Dnmphe

N-methylaminoisobutyrate	Nmaib	D-N-methylproline	Dnmpro
N-(1-methylpropyl)glycine	Nile	D-N-methylserine	Dnmser
N-(2-methylpropyl)glycine	Nleu	D-N-methylthreonine	Dnmthr
D-N-methyltryptophan	Dnmtrp	N-(1-methylethyl)glycine	Nval
D-N-methyltyrosine	Dnmtyr	N-methyla-napthylalanine	Nmanap
D-N-methylvaline	Dnmval	N-methylpenicillamine	Nmpen
γ-aminobutyric acid	Gabu	N-(*p*-hydroxyphenyl)glycine	Nhtyr
L-*t*-butylglycine	Tbug	N-(thiomethyl)glycine	Ncys
L-ethylglycine	Etg	penicillamine	Pen
L-homophenylalanine	Hphe	L-α-methylalanine	Mala
L-α-methylarginine	Marg	L-α-methylasparagine	Masn
L-α-methylaspartate	Masp	L-α-methyl-*t*-butylglycine	Mtbug
L-α-methylcysteine	Mcys	L-methylethylglycine	Metg
L-α-methylglutamine	Mgln	L-α-methylglutamate	Mglu
L-α-methylhistidine	Mhis	L-α-methylhomophenylalanine	Mhphe
L-α-methylisoleucine	Mile	N-(2-methylthioethyl)glycine	Nmet
L-α-methylleucine	Mleu	L-α-methyllysine	Mlys
L-α-methylmethionine	Mmet	L-α-methylnorleucine	Mnle
L-α-methylnorvaline	Mnva	L-α-methylornithine	Morn
L-α-methylphenylalanine	Mphe	L-α-methylproline	Mpro
L-α-methylserine	Mser	L-α-methylthreonine	Mthr
L-α-methyltryptophan	Mtrp	L-α-methyltyrosine	Mtyr
L-α-methylvaline	Mval	L-N-methylhomophenylalanine	Nmhphe
N-(N-(2,2-diphenylethyl) carbamylmethyl)glycine	Nnbhm	N-(N-(3,3-diphenylpropyl) carbamylmethyl)glycine	Nnbhe
1-carboxy-1-(2,2-diphenyl-ethylamino)cyclopropane	Nmbc		

Crosslinkers can be used, for example, to stabilise 3D conformations, using homo-bifunctional crosslinkers such as the bifunctional imido esters having $(CH_2)_n$ spacer groups with n=1 to n=6, glutaraldehyde, N-hydroxysuccinimide esters and hetero-bifunctional reagents which usually contain an amino-reactive moiety such as N-hydroxysuccinimide and another group

specific-reactive moiety.

The nucleic acid molecule of the present invention is preferably in isolated form or ligated to a vector, such as an expression vector. By "isolated" is meant a nucleic acid molecule having undergone at least one purification step and this is conveniently defined, for example, by a composition comprising at least about 10% subject nucleic acid molecule, preferably at least about 20%, more preferably at least about 30%, still more preferably at least about 40-50%, even still more preferably at least about 60-70%, yet even still more preferably 80-90% or greater of subject nucleic acid molecule relative to other components as determined by molecular weight, encoding activity, nucleotide sequence, base composition or other convenient means. The nucleic acid molecule of the present invention may also be considered, in a preferred embodiment, to be biologically pure.

The term "protein" should be understood to encompass peptides, polypeptides and proteins. The protein may be glycosylated or unglycosylated and/or may contain a range of other molecules fused, linked, bound or otherwise associated to the protein such as amino acids, lipids, carbohydrates or other peptides, polypeptides or proteins. Reference hereinafter to a "protein" includes a protein comprising a sequence of amino acids as well as a protein associated with other molecules such as amino acids, lipids, carbohydrates or other peptides, polypeptides or proteins.

In a particularly preferred embodiment, the nucleotide sequence corresonding to *sphingosine kinase* is a cDNA sequence comprising a sequence of nucleotides as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative or analogue thereof including a nucleotide sequence having similarity to <400>1.

A derivative of a nucleic acid molecule of the present invention also includes a nucleic acid molecule capable of hybridising to a nucleotide sequence as set forth in <400>1 under low stringency conditions. Preferably, low stringency is at 42°C.

The nucleic acid molecule may be ligated to an expression vector capable of expression in a prokaryotic cell (e.g. *E.coli*) or a eukaryotic cell (e.g. yeast cells, fungal cells, insect cells, mammalian cells or plant cells). The nucleic acid molecule may be ligated or fused or otherwise associated with a nucleic acid molecule encoding another entity such as, for example, a signal peptide. It may also comprise additional nucleotide sequence information fused, linked or otherwise associated with it either at the 3' or 5' terminal portions or at both the 3' and 5' terminal portions. The nucleic acid molecule may also be part of a vector, such as an expression vector. The latter embodiment facilitates production of recombinant forms of sphingosine kinase which forms are encompassed by the present invention.

The present invention extends to the expression product of the nucleic acid molecules as hereinbefore defined.

The expression product is sphingosine kinase having an amino acid sequence set forth in <400>2 or is a derivative, analogue or chemical equivalent or mimetic thereof as defined above or is a derivative or mimetic having an amino acid sequence of at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in the amino acid sequence as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof.

Another aspect of the present invention is directed to an isolated protein selected from the list consisting of:

(i) A novel sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative, analogue, chemical equivalent or mimetic thereof.

(ii) A human sphingosine kinase protein or a derivative, analogue, chemical equivalent or mimetic thereof.

(iii) A protein having an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof or a sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2 or a derivative, analogue, chemical

equivalent or mimetic of said protein.

(iv) A protein encoded by a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative or analogue thereof or a sequence encoding an amino acid sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2 or a derivative, analogue, chemical equivalent or mimetic of said protein.

(v) A protein encoded by a nucleic acid molecule capable of hybridising to the nucleotide sequence as set forth in <400>1 or a derivative or analogue thereof under low stringency conditions and which encodes an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in <400>2 or a derivative or mimetic thereof or an amino acid sequence having at least about 45% similarity to at least 10 contiguous amino acids in <400>2.

(vi) A protein as defined in paragraphs (i) or (ii) or (iii) or (iv) or (v) in a homodimeric form.

(vii) A protein as defined in paragraphs (i) or (ii) or (iii) or (iv) or (v) in a heterodimeric form.

The protein of the present invention is preferably in isolated form. By "isolated" is meant a protein having undergone at least one purification step and this is conveniently defined, for example, by a composition comprising at least about 10% subject protein, preferably at least about 20%, more preferably at least about 30%, still more preferably at least about 40-50%, even still more preferably at least about 60-70%, yet even still more preferably 80-90% or greater of subject protein relative to other components as determined by molecular weight, amino acid sequence or other convenient means. The protein of the present invention may also be considered, in a preferred embodiment, to be biologically pure.

The sphingosine kinase of the present invention may be in multimeric form meaning that two or more molecules are associated together. Where the same sphingosine kinase molecules are associated together, the complex is a homomultimer. An example of a homomultimer is a

homodimer. Where at least one sphingosine kinase is associated with at least one non-sphingosine kinase molecule, then the complex is a heteromultimer such as a heterodimer.

The ability to produce recombinant sphingosine kinase permits the large scale production of sphingosine kinase for commercial use. The sphingosine kinase may need to be produced as part of a large peptide, polypeptide or protein which may be used as is or may first need to be processed in order to remove the extraneous proteinaceous sequences. Such processing includes digestion with proteases, peptidases and amidases or a range of chemical, electrochemical, sonic or mechanical disruption techniques.

Notwithstanding that the present invention encompasses recombinant proteins, chemical synthetic techniques are also preferred in synthesis of sphingosine kinase.

Sphingosine kinase according to the present invention is conveniently synthesised based on molecules isolated from the human. Isolation of the human molecules may be accomplished by any suitable means such as by chromotographic separation, for example using CM-cellulose ion exchange chromotography followed by Sephadex (e.g. G-50 column) filtration. Many other techniques are available including HPLC, PAGE amongst others.

Sphingosine kinase may be synthesised by solid phase synthesis using F-moc chemistry as described by Carpino *et al.* (1991). Sphingosine kinase and fragments thereof may also be synthesised by alternative chemistries including, but not limited to, t-Boc chemistry as described in Stewart *et al.* (1985) or by classical methods of liquid phase peptide synthesis.

Without limiting the theory or mode of action of the present invention, sphingosine kinase is a key regulatory enzyme in the activity of the sphingosine kinase signalling pathway. By "sphingosine kinase signalling pathway" is meant a signalling pathway which utilises one or both of sphingosine kinase and/or sphingosine-1-phosphate. It is thought that a sphingosine kinase signalling pathway cascade which results in adhesion molecule expression may take the form of:

(i) the generation of ceramide from sphingomyelin via *S.Mase* activity, said ceramide being converted to sphingosine;

(ii) sphingosine-1-phosphate (referred to hereinafter as "Sph-1-P") generation by stimulation of sphingosine kinase; and

(iii) the activation of MEK/ERK and nuclear translocation of NF-κB downstream from Sph-1-P generation.

The sphingosine kinase signalling pathway is known to regulate cellular activities such as those which lead to inflammation, apoptosis and cell proliferation. For example, upregulation of the production of inflammatory mediators such as cytokines, chemokines, eNOS and upregulation of adhesion molecule expression. Said upregulation may be induced by a number of stimuli including, for example, inflammatory cytokines such as tumour necrosis factor-α (TNF-α) and interleukin-1 (IL-1), endotoxin, oxidised or modified lipids, radiation or tissue injury.

The cloning and sequencing of this gene and its expression product now provides additional molecules for use in the prophylactic and therapeutic treatment of diseases characterised by unwanted cellular activity, which activity is either directly or indirectly modulated via the activity of the sphingosine kinase signalling pathway. Examples of diseases involving unwanted sphingosine kinase regulated cellular activity include rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, atherosclerosis, meningitis, multiple sclerosis and septic shock. Accordingly, the present invention contemplates therapeutic and prophylactic uses of sphingosine kinase amino acid and nucleic acid molecules, in addition to sphingosine kinase agonistic and antagonistic agents, for the regulation of cellular functional activity, such as for example, regulation of inflammation.

The present invention contemplates, therefore, a method for modulating expression of *sphingosine kinase* in a subject, said method comprising contacting the *sphingosine kinase* gene with an effective amount of an agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to up-regulate or down-regulate or otherwise modulate expression of *sphingosine kinase*. For

example, *sphingosine kinase* antisense sequences such as oligonucleotides may be introduced into a cell to down-regulate one or more specific functional activities of that cell. Conversely, a nucleic acid molecule encoding sphingosine kinase or a derivative thereof may be introduced to up-regulate one or more specific functional activities of any cell not expressing the endogenous *sphingosine kinase* gene.

Another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method of modulating activity of sphingosine kinase in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal a modulating effective amount of an agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to increase or decrease sphingosine kinase activity.

Modulation of said activity by the administration of an agent to a mammal can be achieved by one of several techniques, including but in no way limited to introducing into said mammal a proteinaceous or non-proteinaceous molecule which:

(i) modulates expression of *sphingosine kinase*;

(ii) functions as an antagonist of sphingosine kinase;

(iii) functions as an agonist of sphingosine kinase.

Said proteinaceous molecule may be derived from natural or recombinant sources including fusion proteins or following, for example, natural product screening. Said non-proteinaceous molecule may be, for example, a nucleic acid molecule or may be derived from natural sources, such as for example natural product screening or may be chemically synthesised. The present invention contemplates chemical analogs of sphingosine kinase or small molecules capable of acting as agonists or antagonists of sphingosine kinase. Chemical agonists may not necessarily be derived from sphingosine kinase but may share certain conformational similarities. Alternatively, chemical agonists may be specifically designed to mimic certain physiochemical properties of sphingosine kinase. Antagonists may be any compound capable of blocking, inhibiting or otherwise preventing sphingosine kinase from carrying out its normal biological

functions. Antagonists include monoclonal antibodies specific for sphingosine kinase, or parts of sphingosine kinase, and antisense nucleic acids which prevent transcription or translation of *sphingosine kinase* genes or mRNA in mammalian cells. Modulation of *sphingosine kinase* expression may also be achieved utilising antigens, RNA, ribosomes, DNAzymes, RNA aptamers or antibodies.

Said proteinaceous or non-proteinaceous molecule may act either directly or indirectly to modulate the expression of *sphingosine kinase* or the activity of sphingosine kinase. Said molecule acts directly if it associates with *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase to modulate the expression or activity of *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase. Said molecule acts indirectly if it associates with a molecule other than *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase which other molecule either directly or indirectly modulates the expression or activity of *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase. Accordingly, the method of the present invention encompasses the regulation of *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase expression or activity via the induction of a cascade of regulatory steps which lead to the regulation of *sphingosine kinase* or sphingosine kinase expression or activity.

Another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method of modulating cellular functional activity in a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of an agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to modulate the expression of a nucleotide sequence encoding sphingosine kinase or sufficient to modulate the activity of sphingosine kinase.

Yet another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method of modulating cellular functional activity in a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase*.

The sphingosine kinase, *sphingosine kinase* or agent used may also be linked to a targeting means such as a monoclonal antibody, which provides specific delivery of the sphingosine kinase, *sphingosine kinase* or agent to the target cells.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the sphingosine kinase, *sphingosine kinase* or agent used in the method is linked to an antibody specific for said target cells to enable specific delivery to these cells.

Reference to "modulating cellular functional activity" is a reference to up-regulating, down-regulating or otherwise altering any one or more of the activities which a cell is capable of performing such as, but not limited to, one or more of chemokine production, cytokine production, nitric oxide synthesase, adhesion molecule expression and production of other inflammatory modulators.

Administration of the sphingosine kinase, *sphingosine kinase* or agent, in the form of a pharmaceutical composition, may be performed by any convenient means. Sphingosine kinase, *sphingosine kinase* or agent of the pharmaceutical composition are contemplated to exhibit therapeutic activity when administered in an amount which depends on the particular case. The variation depends, for example, on the human or animal and the sphingosine kinase, *sphingosine kinase* or agent chosen. A broad range of doses may be applicable. Considering a patient, for example, from about 0.1 mg to about 1 mg of sphingosine kinase or agent may be administered per kilogram of body weight per day. Dosage regimes may be adjusted to provide the optimum therapeutic response. For example, several divided doses may be administered daily, weekly, monthly or other suitable time intervals or the dose may be proportionally reduced as indicated by the exigencies of the situation. The sphingosine kinase or agent may be administered in a convenient manner such as by the oral, intravenous (where water soluble), intranasal, intraperitoneal, intramuscular, subcutaneous, intradermal or suppository routes or implanting (e.g. using slow release molecules). With particular reference to use of sphingosine kinase or agent, these peptides may be administered in the form of pharmaceutically acceptable nontoxic salts, such as acid addition salts or metal complexes, e.g. with zinc, iron or the like (which are considered as salts for purposes of this application). Illustrative of such acid addition salts are hydrochloride, hydrobromide, sulphate, phosphate, maleate, acetate, citrate, benzoate, succinate, malate, ascorbate, tartrate and the like. If the active ingredient is to be administered in tablet form, the tablet may contain a binder such as tragacanth, corn starch or gelatin; a disintegrating agent, such as alginic acid; and a lubricant,

such as magnesium stearate.

A further aspect of the present invention relates to the use of the invention in relation to mammalian disease conditions. For example, the present invention is particularly useful, but in no way limited to, use in inflammatory diseases.

Accordingly, another aspect of the present invention relates to a method of treating a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of an agent for a time and under conditions sufficient to modulate the expression of *sphingosine kinase* or sufficient to modulate the activity of sphingosine kinase wherein said modulation results in modulation of cellular functional activity.

In another aspect the present invention relates to a method of treating a mammal said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* for a time and under conditions sufficient to modulate cellular functional activity.

Yet another aspect of the present invention relates to the use of an agent capable of modulating the expression of *sphingosine kinase* or modulating the activity of sphingosine kinase in the manufacture of a medicament for the modulation of cellular functional activity.

A further aspect of the present invention relates to the use of sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* in the manufacture of a medicament for the modulation of cellular functional activity.

Still yet another aspect of the present invention relates to agents for use in modulating *sphingosine kinase* expression or sphingosine kinase activity wherein said modulation results in modulation of cellular functional activity.

Another aspect of the present invention relates to sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* for use in modulating cellular functional activity.

In a related aspect of the present invention, the mammal undergoing treatment may be a human or an animal in need of therapeutic or prophylactic treatment.

In yet another further aspect the present invention contemplates a pharmaceutical composition comprising *sphingosine kinase*, sphingosine kinase or an agent capable of modulating *sphingosine kinase* expression or sphingosine kinase activity together with one or more pharmaceutically acceptable carriers and/or diluents. *Sphingosine kinase*, sphingosine kinase or said agent are referred to as the active ingredients.

The pharmaceutical forms suitable for injectable use include sterile aqueous solutions (where water soluble) and sterile powders for the extemporaneous preparation of sterile injectable solutions or dispersion. In all cases the form must be sterile and must be fluid to the extent that easy syringability exists. It must be stable under the conditions of manufacture and storage and must be preserved against the contaminating action of microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi. The carrier can be a solvent or dispersion medium containing, for example, water, ethanol, polyol (for example, glycerol, propylene glycol and liquid polyethylene glycol, and the like), suitable mixtures thereof, and vegetable oils. The proper fluidity can be maintained, for example, by the use of a coating such as licithin, by the maintenance of the required particle size in the case of dispersion and by the use of superfactants. The preventions of the action of microorganisms can be brought about by various antibacterial and antifungal agents, for example, parabens, chlorobutanol, phenol, sorbic acid, thirmerosal and the like. In many cases, it will be preferable to include isotonic agents, for example, sugars or sodium chloride. Prolonged absorption of the injectable compositions can be brought about by the use in the compositions of agents delaying absorption, for example, aluminum monostearate and gelatin.

Sterile injectable solutions are prepared by incorporating the active compounds in the required amount in the appropriate solvent with various of the other ingredients enumerated above, as required, followed by filtered sterilization. Generally, dispersions are prepared by incorporating the various sterilized active ingredient into a sterile vehicle which contains the basic dispersion medium and the required other ingredients from those enumerated above. In the case of sterile powders for the preparation of sterile injectable solutions, the preferred

methods of preparation are vacuum drying and the freeze-drying technique which yield a powder of the active ingredient plus any additional desired ingredient from previously sterile-filtered solution thereof.

When *sphingosine kinase,* sphingosine kinase and sphingosine kinase modulators are suitably protected they may be orally administered, for example, with an inert diluent or with an assimilable edible carrier, or they may be enclosed in hard or soft shell gelatin capsule, or they may be compressed into tablets, or they may be incorporated directly with the food of the diet. For oral therapeutic administration, the active compound may be incorporated with excipients and used in the form of ingestible tablets, buccal tablets, troches, capsules, elixirs, suspensions, syrups, wafers, and the like. Such compositions and preparations should contain at least 1% by weight of active compound. The percentage of the compositions and preparations may, of course, be varied and may conveniently be between about 5 to about 80% of the weight of the unit. The amount of active compound in such therapeutically useful compositions in such that a suitable dosage will be obtained. Preferred compositions or preparations according to the present invention are prepared so that an oral dosage unit form contains between about 0.1 μg and 2000 mg of active compound.

The tablets, troches, pills, capsules and the like may also contain the following: A binder such as gum tragacanth, acacia, corn starch or gelatin; excipients such as dicalcium phosphate; a disintegrating agent such as corn starch, potato starch, alginic acid and the like; a lubricant such as magnesium stearate; and a sweetening agent such a sucrose, lactose or saccharin may be added or a flavouring agent such as peppermint, oil of wintergreen, or cherry flavouring. When the dosage unit form is a capsule, it may contain, in addition to materials of the above type, a liquid carrier. Various other materials may be present as coatings or to otherwise modify the physical form of the dosage unit. For instance, tablets, pills, or capsules may be coated with shellac, sugar or both. A syrup or elixir may contain the active compound, sucrose as a sweetening agent, methyl and propylparabens as preservatives, a dye and flavouring such as cherry or orange flavour. Of course, any material used in preparing any dosage unit form should be pharmaceutically pure and substantially non-toxic in the amounts employed. In addition, the active compound may be incorporated into sustained-release preparations and

formulations.

Pharmaceutically acceptable carriers and/or diluents include any and all solvents, dispersion media, coatings, antibacterial and antifungal agents, isotonic and absorption delaying agents and the like. The use of such media and agents for pharmaceutical active substances is well known in the art. Except insofar as any conventional media or agent is incompatible with the active ingredient, use thereof in the therapeutic compositions is contemplated. Supplementary active ingredients can also be incorporated into the compositions.

It is especially advantageous to formulate parenteral compositions in dosage unit form for ease of administration and uniformity of dosage. Dosage unit form as used herein refers to physically discrete units suited as unitary dosages for the mammalian subjects to be treated; each unit containing a predetermined quantity of active material calculated to produce the desired therapeutic effect in association with the required pharmaceutical carrier. The specification for the novel dosage unit forms of the invention are dictated by and directly dependent on (a) the unique characteristics of the active material and the particular therapeutic effect to be achieved, and (b) the limitations inherent in the art of compounding such an active material for the treatment of disease in living subjects having a diseased condition in which bodily health is impaired.

The principal active ingredient is compounded for convenient and effective administration in effective amounts with a suitable pharmaceutically acceptable carrier in dosage unit form as hereinbefore disclosed. A unit dosage form can, for example, contain the principal active compound in amounts ranging from 0.5 μg to about 2000 mg. Expressed in proportions, the active compound is generally present in from about 0.5 μg to about 2000 mg/ml of carrier. In the case of compositions containing supplementary active ingredients, the dosages are determined by reference to the usual dose and manner of administration of the said ingredients.

The pharmaceutical composition may also comprise genetic molecules such as a vector capable of transfecting target cells where the vector carries a nucleic acid molecule capable of expressing *sphingosine kinase,* modulating *sphingosine kinase* expression or sphingosine

kinase activity. The vector may, for example, be a viral vector.

Sphingosine kinase can also be utilised to create gene knockout models in either cells or animals, which knocked out gene is the sphingosine kinase gene expressed by said cells or animals. Accordingly in another aspect the present invention should be understood to extend to methods of creating sphingosine kinase gene cell or animal knockout models wherein sphingosine kinase has been utilised to facilitate knocking out of the endogenous sphingosine kinase gene of said cell or animal, and to the knockout models produced therefrom.

Still another aspect of the present invention is directed to antibodies to sphingosine kinase including catalytic antibodies. Such antibodies may be monoclonal or polyclonal and may be selected from naturally occurring antibodies to sphingosine kinase or may be specifically raised to sphingosine kinase. In the case of the latter, sphingosine kinase may first need to be associated with a carrier molecule. The antibodies and/or recombinant sphingosine kinase of the present invention are particularly useful as therapeutic or diagnostic agents. Alternatively, fragments of antibodies may be used such as Fab fragments. Furthermore, the present invention extends to recombinant and synthetic antibodies and to antibody hybrids. A "synthetic antibody" is considered herein to include fragments and hybrids of antibodies. The antibodies of this aspect of the present invention are particularly useful for immunotherapy and may also be used as a diagnostic tool, for example, for monitoring the program of a therapeutic regime.

For example, sphingosine kinase can be used to screen for naturally occurring antibodies to sphingosine kinase. These may occur, for example in some inflammatory disorders.

For example, specific antibodies can be used to screen for sphingosine kinase proteins. The latter would be important, for example, as a means for screening for levels of sphingosine kinase in a cell extract or other biological fluid or purifying sphingosine kinase made by recombinant means from culture supernatant fluid. Techniques for the assays contemplated herein are known in the art and include, for example, sandwich assays, ELISA and flow cytometry.

It is within the scope of this invention to include any second antibodies (monoclonal, polyclonal or fragments of antibodies) directed to the first mentioned antibodies discussed above. Both the first and second antibodies may be used in detection assays or a first antibody may be used with a commercially available anti-immunoglobulin antibody. An antibody as contemplated herein includes any antibody specific to any region of sphingosine kinase.

Both polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies are obtainable by immunization with the protein or peptide derivatives and either type is utilizable for immunoassays. The methods of obtaining both types of sera are well known in the art. Polyclonal sera are less preferred but are relatively easily prepared by injection of a suitable laboratory animal with an effective amount of sphingosine kinase, or antigenic parts thereof, collecting serum from the animal, and isolating specific sera by any of the known immunoadsorbent techniques. Although antibodies produced by this method are utilizable in virtually any type of immunoassay, they are generally less favoured because of the potential heterogeneity of the product.

The use of monoclonal antibodies in an immunoassay is particularly preferred because of the ability to produce them in large quantities and the homogeneity of the product. The preparation of hybridoma cell lines for monoclonal antibody production derived by fusing an immortal cell line and lymphocytes sensitized against the immunogenic preparation can be done by techniques which are well known to those who are skilled in the art. (See, for example Douillard and Hoffman, Basic Facts about Hybridomas, in *Compendium of Immunology* Vol II, ed. by Schwartz, 1981; Kohler and Milstein, *Nature 256*: 495-499, 1975; *European Journal of Immunology 6*: 511-519, 1976).

In another aspect of the present invention, the molecules of the present invention are also useful as screening targets for use in applications such as the diagnosis of disorders which are regulated by sphingosine kinase.

Yet another aspect of the present invention contemplates a method for detecting sphingosine kinase or *sphingosine kinase* mRNA in a biological sample from a subject said method comprising contacting said biological sample with an antibody specific for sphingosine kinase

or *sphingosine kinase* mRNA or its derivatives or homologs for a time and under conditions sufficient for an antibody-sphingosine kinase or antibody-sphingosine kinase mRNA complex to form, and then detecting said complex.

The presence of sphingosine kinase may be determined in a number of ways such as by Western blotting, ELISA or flow cytometry procedures. Sphingosine kinase mRNA may be detected, for example, by *in situ* hybridization or Northern blotting. These, of course, include both single-site and two-site or "sandwich" assays of the non-competitive types, as well as in the traditional competitive binding assays. These assays also include direct binding of a labelled antibody to a target.

Sandwich assays are among the most useful and commonly used assays and are favoured for use in the present invention. A number of variations of the sandwich assay technique exist, and all are intended to be encompassed by the present invention. Briefly, in a typical forward assay, an unlabelled antibody is immobilized on a solid substrate and the sample to be tested brought into contact with the bound molecule. After a suitable period of incubation, for a period of time sufficient to allow formation of an antibody-antigen complex, a second antibody specific to the antigen, labelled with a reporter molecule capable of producing a detectable signal is then added and incubated, allowing time sufficient for the formation of another complex of antibody-antigen-labelled antibody. Any unreacted material is washed away, and the presence of the antigen is determined by observation of a signal produced by the reporter molecule. The results may either be qualitative, by simple observation of the visible signal, or may be quantitated by comparing with a control sample containing known amounts of hapten. Variations on the forward assay include a simultaneous assay, in which both sample and labelled antibody are added simultaneously to the bound antibody. These techniques are well known to those skilled in the art, including any minor variations as will be readily apparent. In accordance with the present invention the sample is one which might contain sphingosine kinase including cell extract, tissue biopsy or possibly serum, saliva, mucosal secretions, lymph, tissue fluid and respiratory fluid. The sample is, therefore, generally a biological sample comprising biological fluid but also extends to fermentation fluid and supernatant fluid such as from a cell culture.

In the typical forward sandwich assay, a first antibody having specificity for the sphingosine kinase or antigenic parts thereof, is either covalently or passively bound to a solid surface. The solid surface is typically glass or a polymer, the most commonly used polymers being cellulose, polyacrylamide, nylon, polystyrene, polyvinyl chloride or polypropylene. The solid supports may be in the form of tubes, beads, discs of microplates, or any other surface suitable for conducting an immunoassay. The binding processes are well-known in the art and generally consist of cross-linking covalently binding or physically adsorbing, the polymer-antibody complex is washed in preparation for the test sample. An aliquot of the sample to be tested is then added to the solid phase complex and incubated for a period of time sufficient (e.g. 2-40 minutes) and under suitable conditions (e.g. 25°C) to allow binding of any subunit present in the antibody. Following the incubation period, the antibody subunit solid phase is washed and dried and incubated with a second antibody specific for a portion of the hapten. The second antibody is linked to a reporter molecule which is used to indicate the binding of the second antibody to the hapten.

An alternative method involves immobilizing the target molecules in the biological sample and then exposing the immobilized target to specific antibody which may or may not be labelled with a reporter molecule. Depending on the amount of target and the strength of the reporter molecule signal, a bound target may be detectable by direct labelling with the antibody. Alternatively, a second labelled antibody, specific to the first antibody is exposed to the target-first antibody complex to form a target-first antibody-second antibody tertiary complex. The complex is detected by the signal emitted by the reporter molecule.

By "reporter molecule" as used in the present specification, is meant a molecule which, by its chemical nature, provides an analytically identifiable signal which allows the detection of antigen-bound antibody. Detection may be either qualitative or quantitative. The most commonly used reporter molecules in this type of assay are either enzymes, fluorophores or radionuclide containing molecules (i.e. radioisotopes) and chemiluminescent molecules.

In the case of an enzyme immunoassay, an enzyme is conjugated to the second antibody, generally by means of glutaraldehyde or periodate. As will be readily recognized, however, a wide variety of different conjugation techniques exist, which are readily available to the skilled artisan. Commonly used enzymes include horseradish peroxidase, glucose oxidase, beta-galactosidase and alkaline phosphatase, amongst others. The substrates to be used with the specific enzymes are generally chosen for the production, upon hydrolysis by the corresponding enzyme, of a detectable color change. Examples of suitable enzymes include alkaline phosphatase and peroxidase. It is also possible to employ fluorogenic substrates, which yield a fluorescent product rather than the chromogenic substrates noted above. In all cases, the enzyme-labelled antibody is added to the first antibody hapten complex, allowed to bind, and then the excess reagent is washed away. A solution containing the appropriate substrate is then added to the complex of antibody-antigen-antibody. The substrate will react with the enzyme linked to the second antibody, giving a qualitative visual signal, which may be further quantitated, usually spectrophotometrically, to give an indication of the amount of hapten which was present in the sample. "Reporter molecule" also extends to use of cell agglutination or inhibition of agglutination such as red blood cells on latex beads, and the like.

Alternately, fluorescent compounds, such as fluorecein and rhodamine, may be chemically coupled to antibodies without altering their binding capacity. When activated by illumination with light of a particular wavelength, the fluorochrome-labelled antibody adsorbs the light energy, inducing a state to excitability in the molecule, followed by emission of the light at a characteristic color visually detectable with a light microscope. As in the EIA, the fluorescent labelled antibody is allowed to bind to the first antibody-hapten complex. After washing off the unbound reagent, the remaining tertiary complex is then exposed to the light of the appropriate wavelength the fluorescence observed indicates the presence of the hapten of interest. Immunofluorescene and EIA techniques are both very well established in the art and are particularly preferred for the present method. However, other reporter molecules, such as radioisotope, chemiluminescent or bioluminescent molecules, may also be employed.

The present invention also contemplates genetic assays such as involving PCR analysis to detect *sphingosine kinase* or its derivatives.

Further features of the present invention are more fully described in the following non-limiting examples.

EXAMPLE 1

PURIFICATION OF SPHINGOSINE KINASE FROM HUMAN PLACENTA

Sphingosine kinase was purified from 1240 g of human placenta (4 placentas). The placentas were diced, washed in Buffer A (50 mM Tris/HCl buffer, pH 7.4 containing 10 % (v/v) glycerol, 0.05 % Triton X-100 and 1 mM dithiothreitol), transfered to 1.5 L of fresh Buffer A containing a protease inhibitor cocktail (Complete™; Boehringer Mannheim) (Buffer B), and homogenised in a Waring blender. The resultant homogenate was stored on ice for 30 min to enhance enzyme extraction, and the soluble fraction of the homogenate then isolated by centrifugation at 20 000 g for 60 min at 4 °C. Sphingosine kinase activity was determined by incubating samples at 37°C for 30 min with sphingosine (50 μM; from a 1 mM stock dissolved in 5% Triton X-100) and [γ-^{32}P]ATP (1 mM; 10 μCi/ml) in assay buffer containing 50 mM Tris/HCl (pH 7.4), 10 mM $MgCl_2$, 10 % glycerol, 1 mM dithiothreitol, 1 mM EDTA, 1 mM Na_3VO_4, 15mM NaF, 0.5 mM 4-deoxypyridoxine in a total volume of 100 μl. Reactions were terminated and sphingosine-1-phosphate extracted by the addition of 0.7 ml of chloroform/methanol/HCl (100:200:1, v/v), followed by vigorous mixing, addition of 0.2 ml chloroform and 0.2 ml 2 M KCl, and phase separation by centrifugation. The labeled sphingosine-1-phosphate in the organic phase was isolated by TLC on Silica Gel 60 with 1-butanol/ethanol/acetic acid/water (8:2:1:2, v/v) and quantitated by phosphorimager. One unit (U) of activity is defined as 1 pmol of sphingosine-1-phosphate formed from sphingosine and ATP per minute.

EXAMPLE 2

STRATEGY USED TO CLONE SPHINGOSINE KINASE (SPHK) FROM HUVEC

PCR using SPHK primers derived from EST sequence (spanning central *Sac*II site) were used in combination with T3 and T7 primers to amplify SPHK from a HUVEC cDNA library. This generated two overlapping PCR products of 669 bp and 550 bp. These products represented

the 5' and 3' ends respectively of SPHK and were separately cloned into pGEM4Z. A 584 bp *Sac*II fragment from the 5' SPHK PCR clone was sub-cloned in the correct orientation into the *Sac*II site of the 3' SPHK PCR clone, to generate a 1130 bp partial SPHK cDNA clone. To generate a full length clone encoding SPHK, a 120 bp *Eco*RI/*Stu*I fragment from the 669 bp 5' clone was sub-cloned into the pGEM4Z-1130 bp clone digested with *Eco*RI/*Stu*I. Sequencing the cDNA clone in both directions has verified the integrity of the SPHK cDNA sequence. The DNA sequence is shown in Figure 5. For bacterial expression, the full length SPHK cDNA has been sub-cloned into pGEX4T2. Sub-cloning of the SPHK cDNA into the mammalian expression vector pcDNA3 in both orientations enabled production of sense and antisense mRNA in mammalian cells.

EXAMPLE 3
RESULTS

Purification of sphingosine kinase from human placenta

Sphingosine kinase has been purified from human placenta. This was achieved using ammonium sulphate precipitation and several chromatographic steps (see Table 3 and Figures 2-8), resulting in over a million-fold purification from the original placenta extract, and giving a single silver-stained protein band after SDS-PAGE (Fig. 9). This is the first sphingosine kinase to be purified to homogeneity from a human source.

Cloning of the human sphingosine kinase

A human sphingosine kinase cDNA has been generated using primers designed from ESTs (Table 4 and Fig 10) aligned with published murine sphingosine kinase sequence [10]. The cloning strategy is shown in Figure 11. The complete cDNA sequence of the HUVEC sphingosine kinase is shown in Figure 12.

Sphingosine kinase activity in mammalian cells

Preliminary studies have been performed to confirm the activity of the HUVEC sphingosine kinase. The pcDNA3 sphingosine kinase clone shown in Figure 11 was introduced into human embryonic kidney cells (HEK293) by transient transfection. While only modest levels of

endogenous sphingosine kinase activity were present in control cells, cells transfected with the HUVEC sphingosine kinase cDNA clone showed a greater than 50 fold increase in activity (see Figure 13).

EXAMPLE 4

EXPRESSION AND ISOLATION OF RECOMBINANT HUMAN SPHINGOSINE KINASE FROM *E. COLI*

The full length SPHK cDNA cloned into pGEX4T2 was transformed into *E. coli* BL21. Overnight cultures (100 ml) of transformed isolates were grown with shaping (200 rpm) at 30°C in Superbroth (20 g/L glucose, 35 g/L tryptone, 20 g/L yeast extract, 5 g/L NaCl, pH 7.5) medium containing ampicillin (100 mg/L). The cultures were diluted 1:20 in fresh medium and grown at 30°C with shaking to an OD_{600} of 0.6-0.7. Expression of the glutathione-*s*-transferase (GST)-coupled sphingosine kinase (GST-SK) was then induced by addition of 0.1 mM isopropyl-β-D-thiogalactoside and further incubation of the cultures at 30°C for 3 h. After this time the bacterial cells were then harvested by centrifugation at 6,000 g for 20 min at 4°C and resuspended in 20 ml of buffer B containing 250 mM NaCl. the cells were then lysed with lysozyme at a final concentration of 0.3 mg/ml for 15 min at 25°C followed by sonication, consisting of three cycles of 20s ultrasonic pulses followed by one minute cooling. The lysate was then clarified by centrifugation at 50,000 g for 45 min at 4°C, followed by filtrating through 0.22 μm filters. To be filtered supernatant was then incubated with 0.2 volumes of 50% (w/v) glutathione-Sepharose 4B (Pharmacia) that was washed and pro-equilibrated with buffer B, for 60 min at 4°C with constant mixing. After this time the mixture was poured into a glass chromatography column (10 mm diam.) and the beads (with bound GST-SK) washed with 10 column volumes of buffer B at 4°C. The GST-SK was then eluted from the column in 10 ml of buffer B containing 10 mM reduced glutathione. Cleavage of the GST away from sphingosine kinase was then performed by incubation with 20 μg (30 N.I.H. units) thrombin (Pharmacia) for 3h at 25°C. The released sphingosine kinase was then purified by application of the cleavage mix to a calmodulin-Sepharose column and then a Mono-Q anion exchange column as described earlier (Figs. 4 and 5) for the purification of the sphingosine kinase from human placenta. These columns resulted in purification of the

recombinant sphingosine kinase to homogeneity.

EXAMPLE 5
POST-TRANSLATIONAL MODIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR SPHINGOSINE KINASE FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITY

To determine if post-translational modifications are required for activity of the native sphingosine kinase, the native molecule has been compared to the recombinant enzyme produced in *E. coli* where such modifications would not occur. Specifically, the enzymes have been examined for differences in substrate affinity and accessibility. The premise for this study was that post-translational modifications may cause conformational changes in the structure of sphingosine kinase which may result in detectable changes in the physico-chemical or catalytic properties of the enzyme. In summary, it was determined that recombinantly produced sphingosine kinase retains its functional activity even in the absence of post-translational modification.

(a) Substrate specificity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Relative rates of phosphorylation of sphingosine by the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were arbitrarily set at 100% and correspond to 2.65 kU and 7.43 kU of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases, respective (Figure 14). The substrates examined were added to a final concentration of 100μM in 0.25% (w/v) Triton X-100, and assayed under the standard assay conditions outlined earlier (Table 3).

(b) Substrate and inhibitor kinetics of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Substrate kinetics were determined by supplying substrates over the concentration range of 0.5 to 200μM for sphingosine analogues, and 5 to 1000μM for ATP. Inhibition kinetics were determined by the use of inhibitors over a concentration range of 2 to 50μM (Table 5). In both cases the data were analysed by non-linear regression.

(c) Thermal stabilities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

Thermal stabilities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were determined by assaying the residual activity remaining after preincubation of the enzymes at various temperatures (4 to 80°C) for 30 min at pH 7.4 (50mM Tris/HCl containing 10% glycerol, 0.5M NaCl and 0.05% Triton X-100). The original activities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were arbitrarily set at 100% and correspond to 2.65 kU and 7.43 kU, respectively (Figure 15).

(d) pH stabilities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

pH stabilities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were determined by assaying the residual activity remaining after preincubation of the enzymes at various pH's at 4°C for 5 hr. The original activities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were arbitrarily set at 100% and correspond to 2.65 kU and 7.43 kU, respectively (Figure 16).

(e) The effect of pH on activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

The effect of pH on the activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were determined by assaying the activity over the pH range of 4 to 1 in 50mM buffers (sodium acetate, pH 4.0-5.0; Mes, pH 6.0-7.0; Hepes, pH 7.0-8.2; Tris, pH 8.2-10.0; Caps, pH 10.0-11.0). The maximum activities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were arbitrarily set at 100% and correspond to 2.65 kU and 7.43 kU, respectively (Figure 17).

(f) Effect of metal ions on the activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

The effect of metal ions on the activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were determined by assaying the activity under standard conditions in the presence of various metal ions or EDTA at 10mM. The maximum activities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were arbitrarily set at 100% and correspond to 2.65 kU and 7.43 kU, respectively (Figure 18).

(g) Effect of phospholipids on the activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases.

The effect of various phospolipids on the activity of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases were determined by assaying the activity under standard conditions in the presence of these phospholipids at 10 mol% of Triton X-100. The activities of the native and recombinant sphingosine kinases in the absence of phospholipids were arbitrarily set at 100% and correspond to 2.65 kU and 7.43 kU, respectively (Figure 19). PC, phosphatidylcholine; PS phosphatidylserine; PE, phosphatidylethanolamine; PI, phosphatidylinositol.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention described herein is susceptible to variations and modifications other than those specifically described. It is to be understood that the invention includes all such variations and modifications. The invention also includes all of the steps, features, compositions and compounds referred to or indicated in this specification, individually or collectively, and any and all combinations of any two or more of said steps or features.

Table 3. Summary of purification of sphingosine kinase from human placenta.

Step	Activity	Protein	Specific	Recovery	Purification
Soluble fraction of homogenate	7943	123600	58	100	
Ammonium sulphate (25-35%)	7723	3527	1966	97	33
Q Sepharose anion exchange	4048	1098	4597	63	79
Calmodulin Sepharose	3197	18.23	1.75×10^5	40	3.0×10^3
Mono Q anion exchange	1706	2.921	5.84×10^5	21.5	1.0×10^4
ATP- Mono Q anion exchange	1133	0.419	2.70×10^6	14.3	4.6×10^4
Superdex 75 gel filtration (1)	867	0.088	9.87×10^6	10.9	1.7×10^5
Superdex 75 gel filtration (2)	549	0.008	6.64×10^7	6.9	1.1×10^6

Table 4. Details of human EST sequences.

This Table shows the human EST sequences that are homologous to the HUVEC SPHK. The Accession number is the database identification code. The length in basepairs (bp) is the amount of EST sequence available. The clone number is the individual cDNA clone identification from a library where available. The source is the mRNA template from which the cDNA library was generated.

Accession number	Length	Clone No. /Source
AAD31133	271bp	human fetal lung
AA026479	341bp	pregnant uterus, Soares clone 469133
W63556	399bp	senescent fibroblasts, Soares clone IMAGE:326250
AA081152	356bp	Endothelial cell, Stratagene clone IMAGE:549298
AA232791	386bp	Pooled melanocyte, fetal heart, pregnant uterus, Soares
AI042283	447bp	senescent fibroblasts, Soares clone IMAGE:1665736
AA232646	394bp	Pooled melanocyte, fetal heart, pregnant uterus, Soares
AA639414	412bp	colon tumor, clone IMAGE: 1159486

Table 5.

	Native SK	Recombinant SK
SUBSTRATE KINETICS:		
Sphingosine		
K_m (μM)	14±2	12±3
k_{cat} (s^{-1})	8.4	14.2
k_{cat} / K_m (10^{-5} s^{-1}. M^{-1})	6.0	11.9
Dihydrosphingosine		
K_m (μM)	20±2	19±2
k_{cat} (s^{-1})	5.9	12.7
k_{cat} / K_m (s^{-1}. M^{-1})	3.0	6.6
ATP		
K_m (μM)	77±17	87±22
INHIBITOR KINETICS:		
N,N-dimethylsphingosine		
K_I (μM)	7.8±1	7.5±1
DL-*threo*-dihydrosphingosine		
K_I (μM)	5.9±1	5.7±1
N,N,N-trimethylsphingosine		
K_I (μM)	4.6±1	3.8±1

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by its Patent Attorneys
DAVIES COLLISON CAVE

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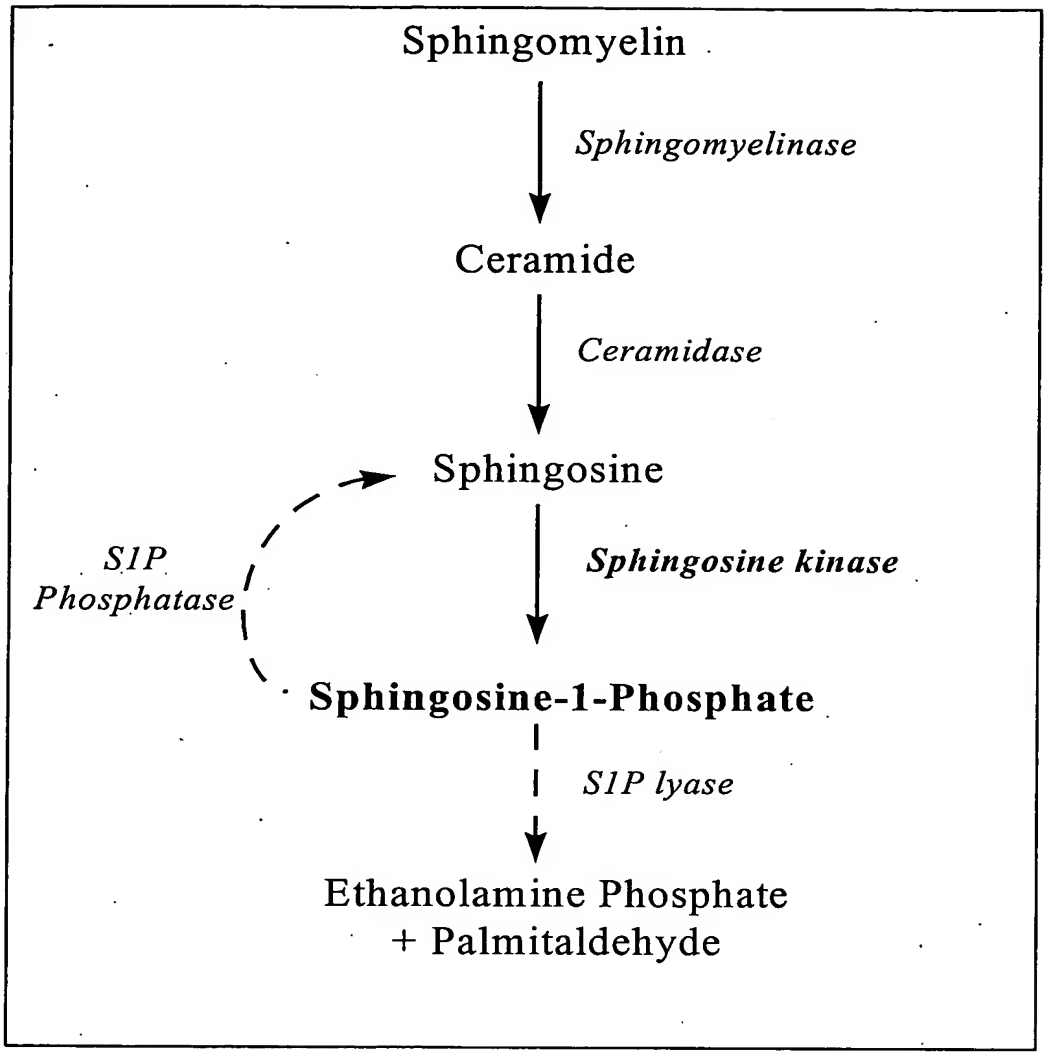
Figure 1.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Ceramide
Ceramidase
Sphingosine
S1P
Phosphatase
Sphingosine kinase
Sphingosine-1-Phosphate
S1P lyase
Ethanolamine Phosphate
+ Palmitaldehyde

Figure 2. Ammonium sulphate precipitation

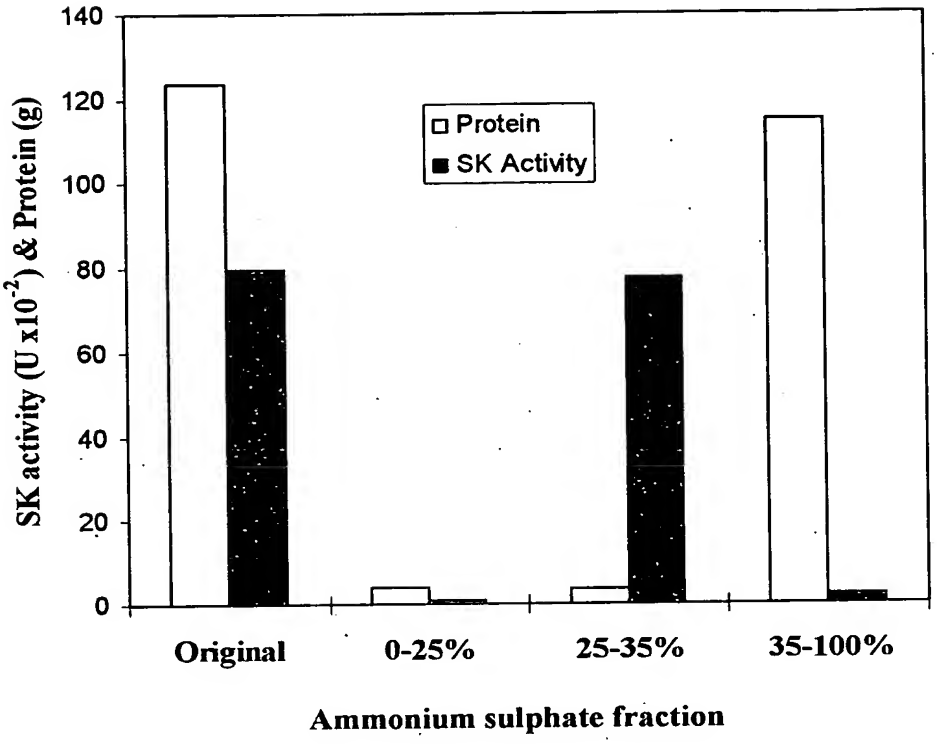


Figure 3. Q Sepharose purification of placenta SK

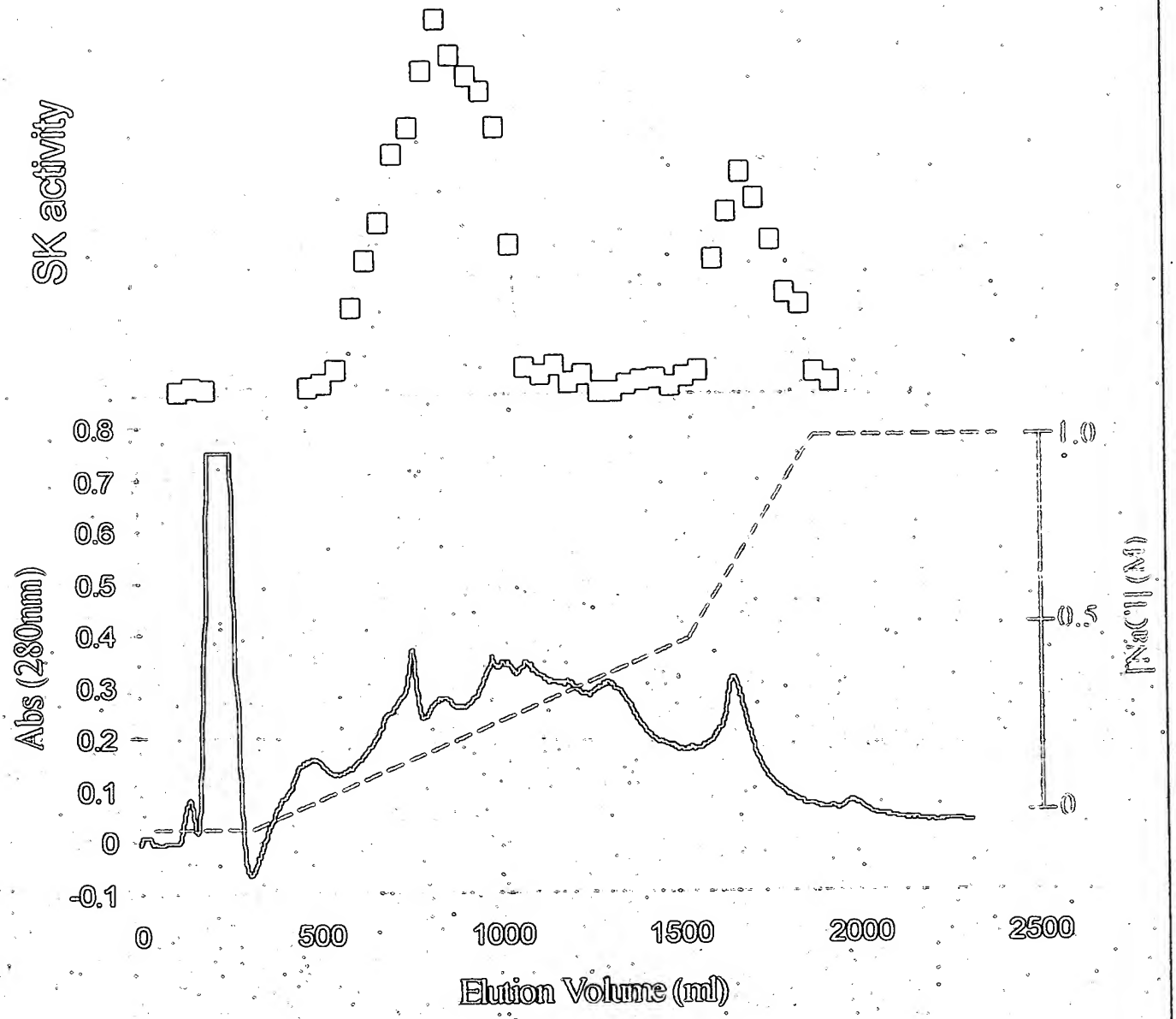


Figure 4. Calmodulin Sepharose affinity purification of human placenta SK

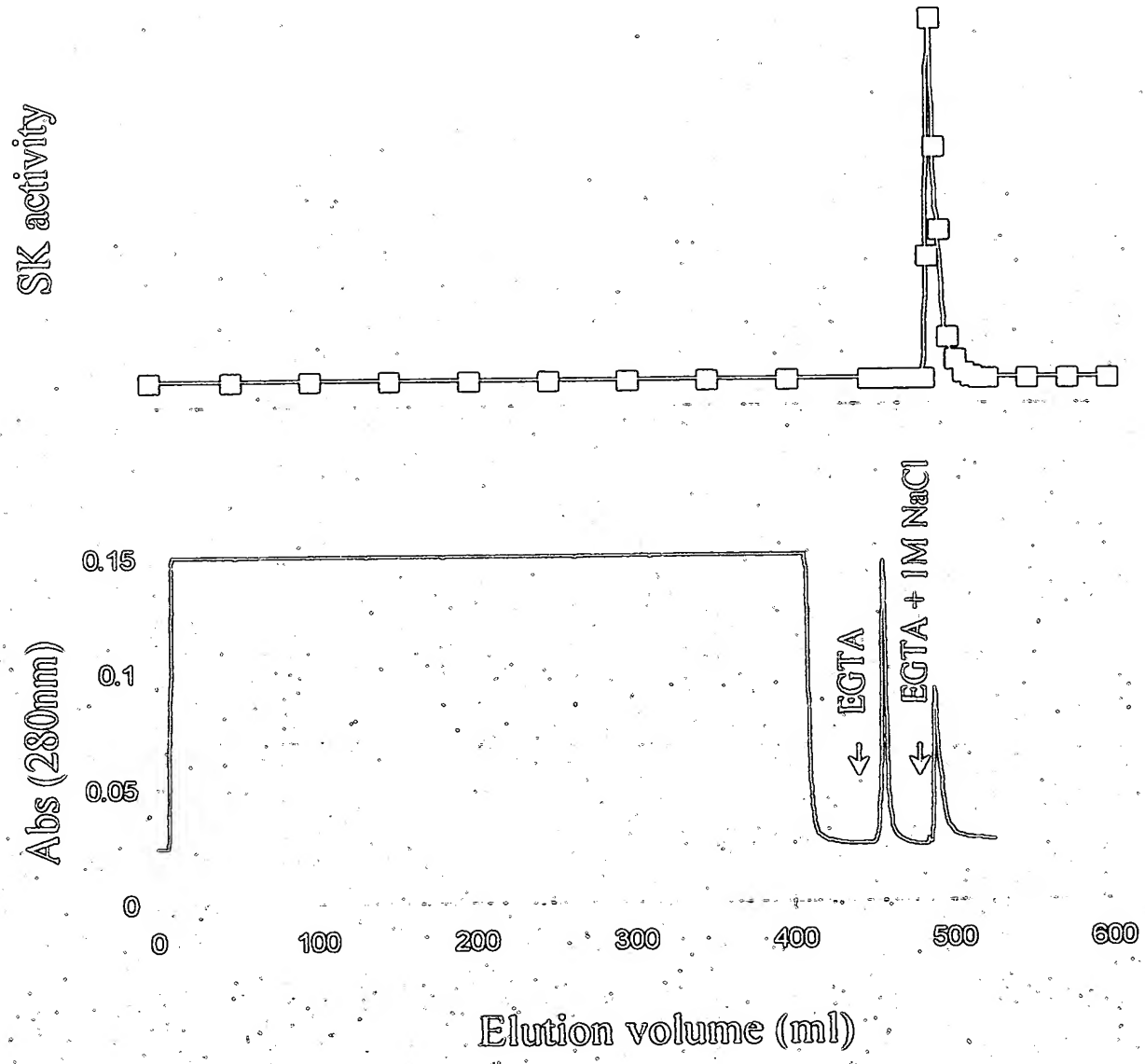


Figure 6. ATP-Mono Q anion exchange chromatography of SK

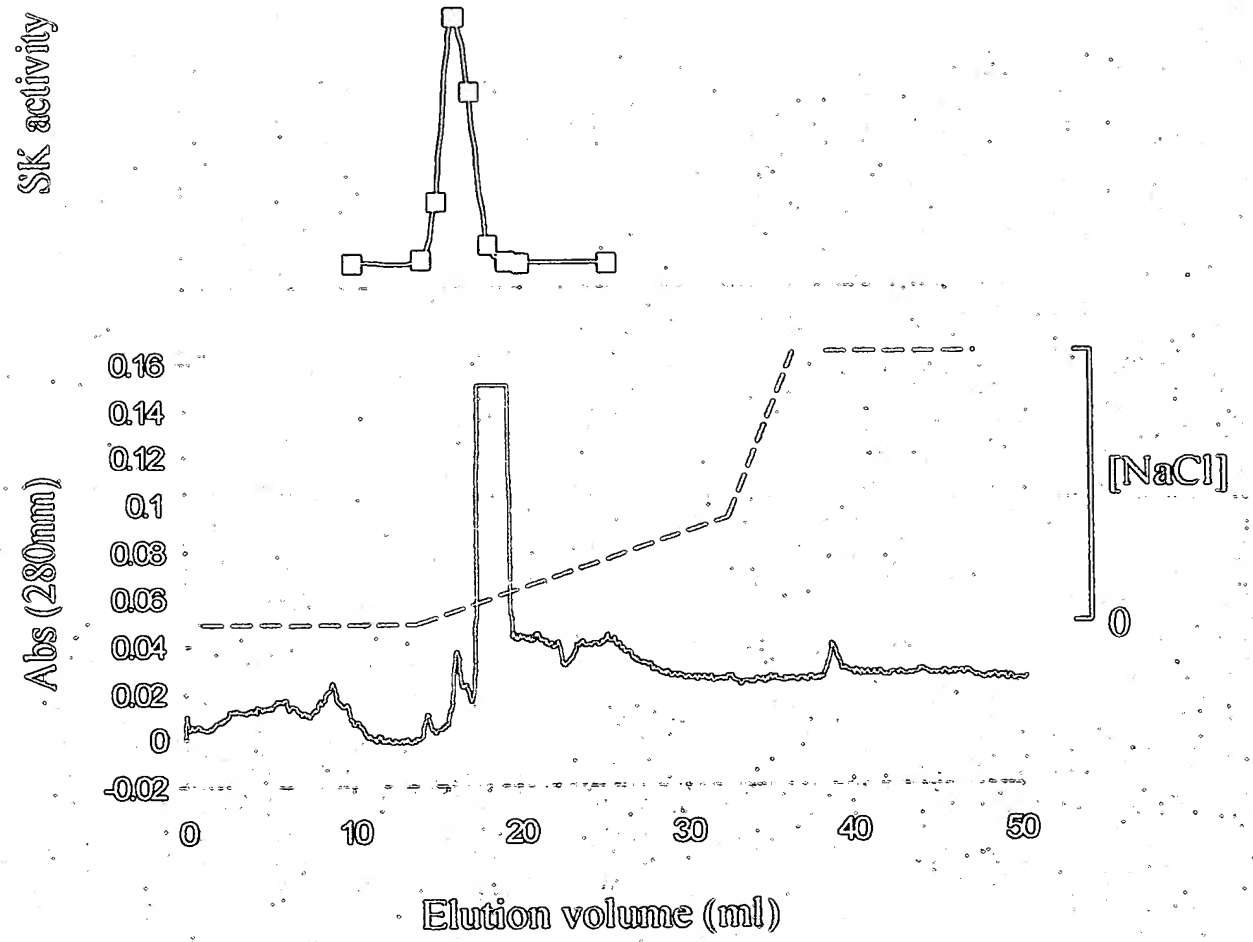


Figure 5. Mono Q anion exchange purification of human placenta SKI

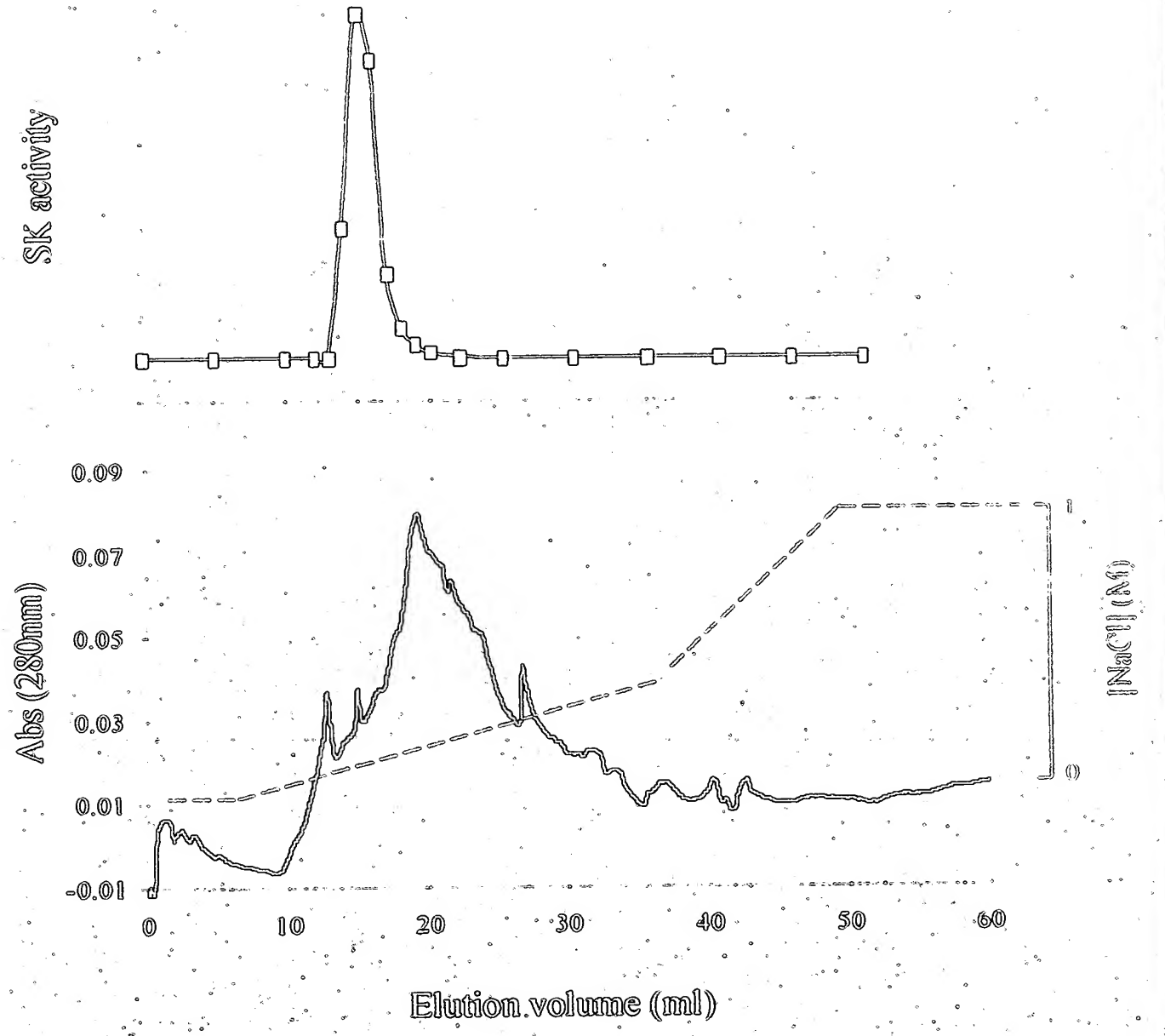


Figure 7. Superdex 75 gel filtration purification of human placenta SKI

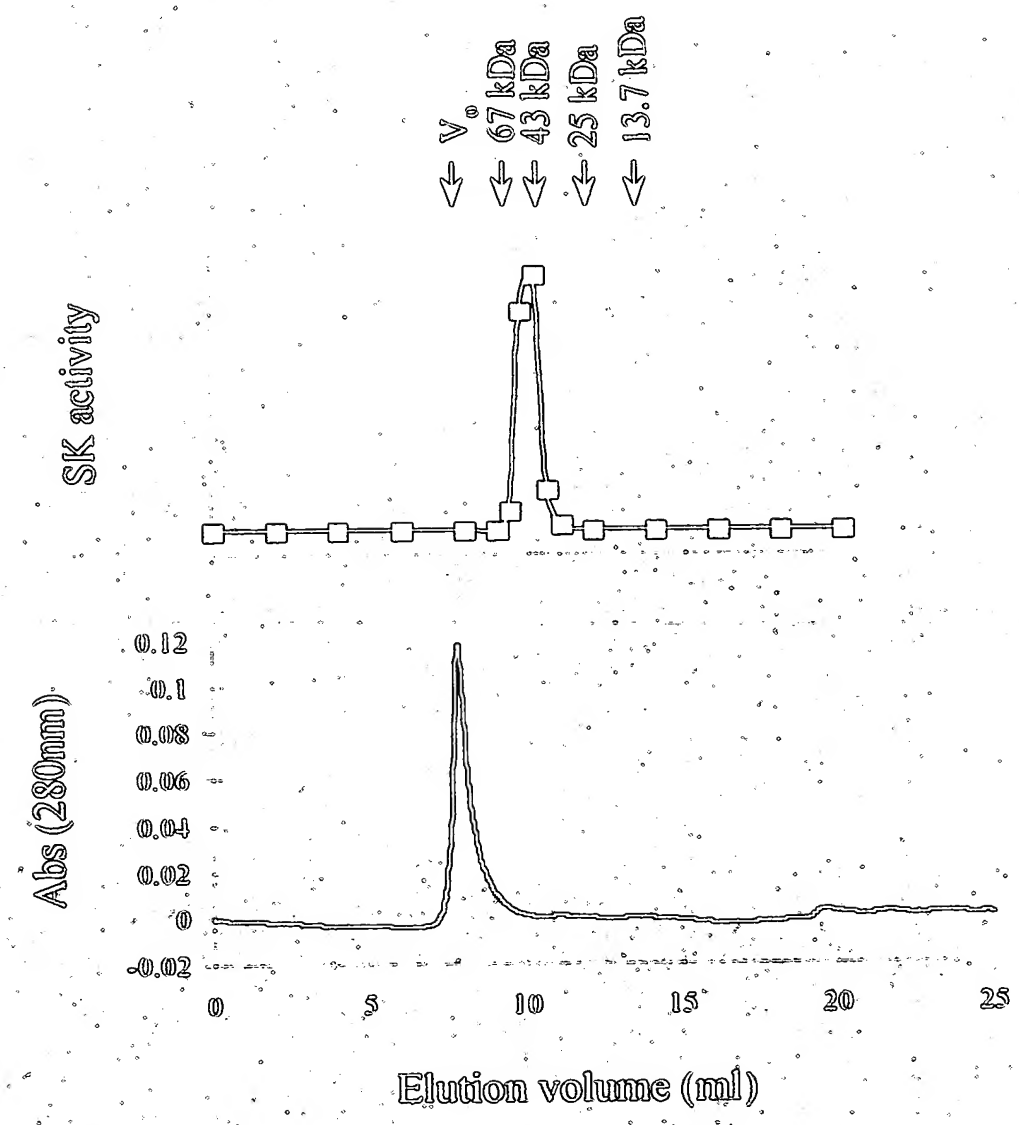


Figure 8. Superdex 75 gel filtration (2) purification of human placenta SK

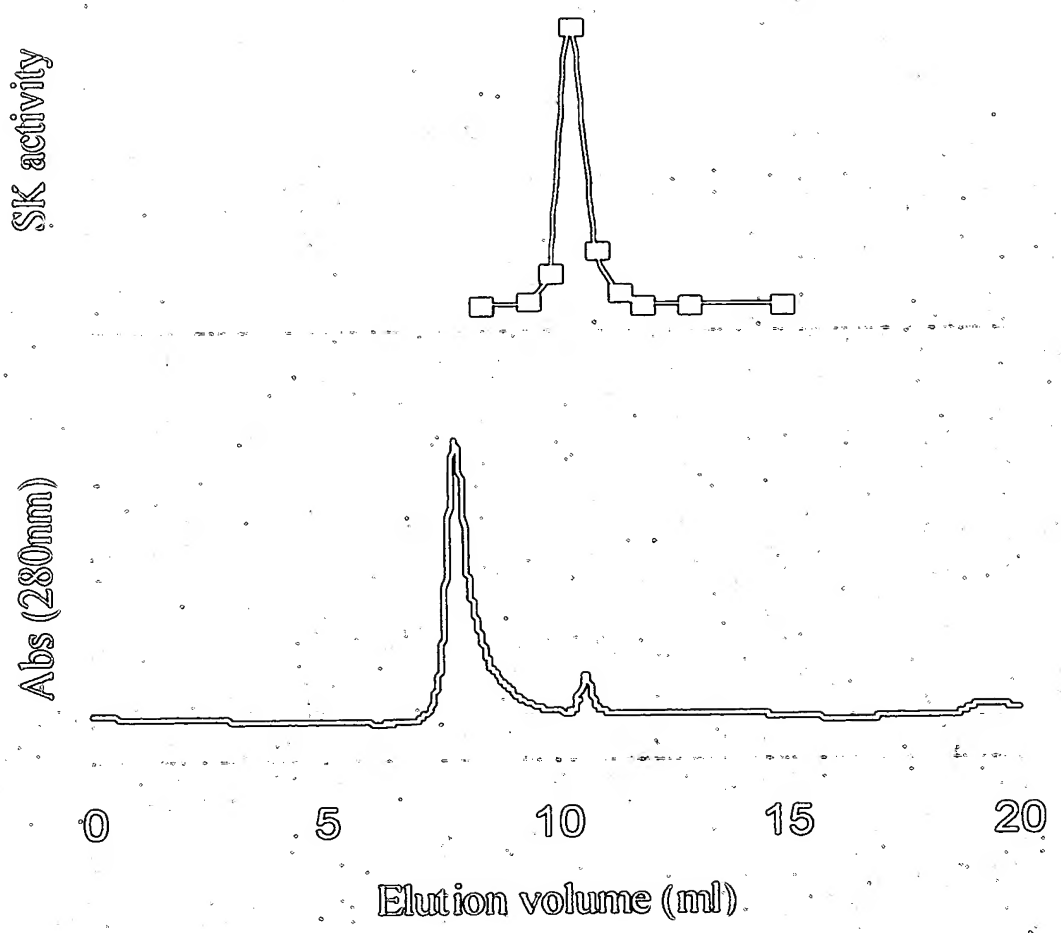


Figure 9. Silver-stained SDS-PAGE gel of purified human placenta SK

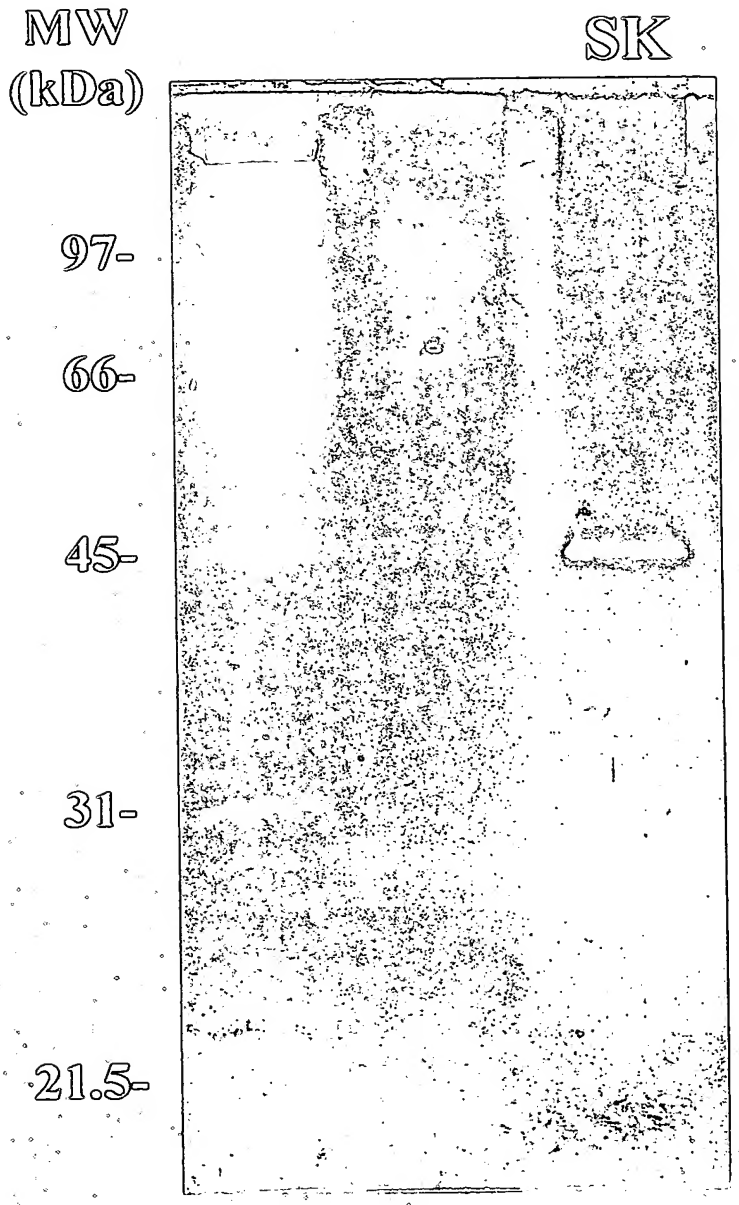
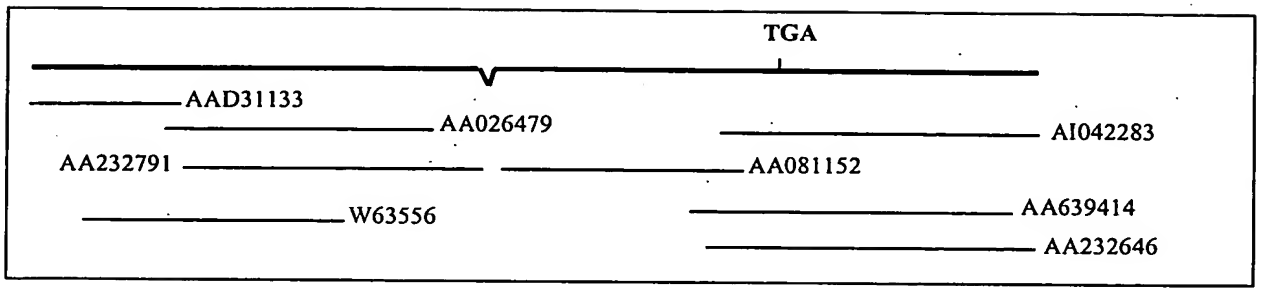


Figure 10.


TGA
AAD31133
AA026479
AI042283
AA232791
AA081152
W63556
AA639414
AA232646

Cloning of HUVEC SK

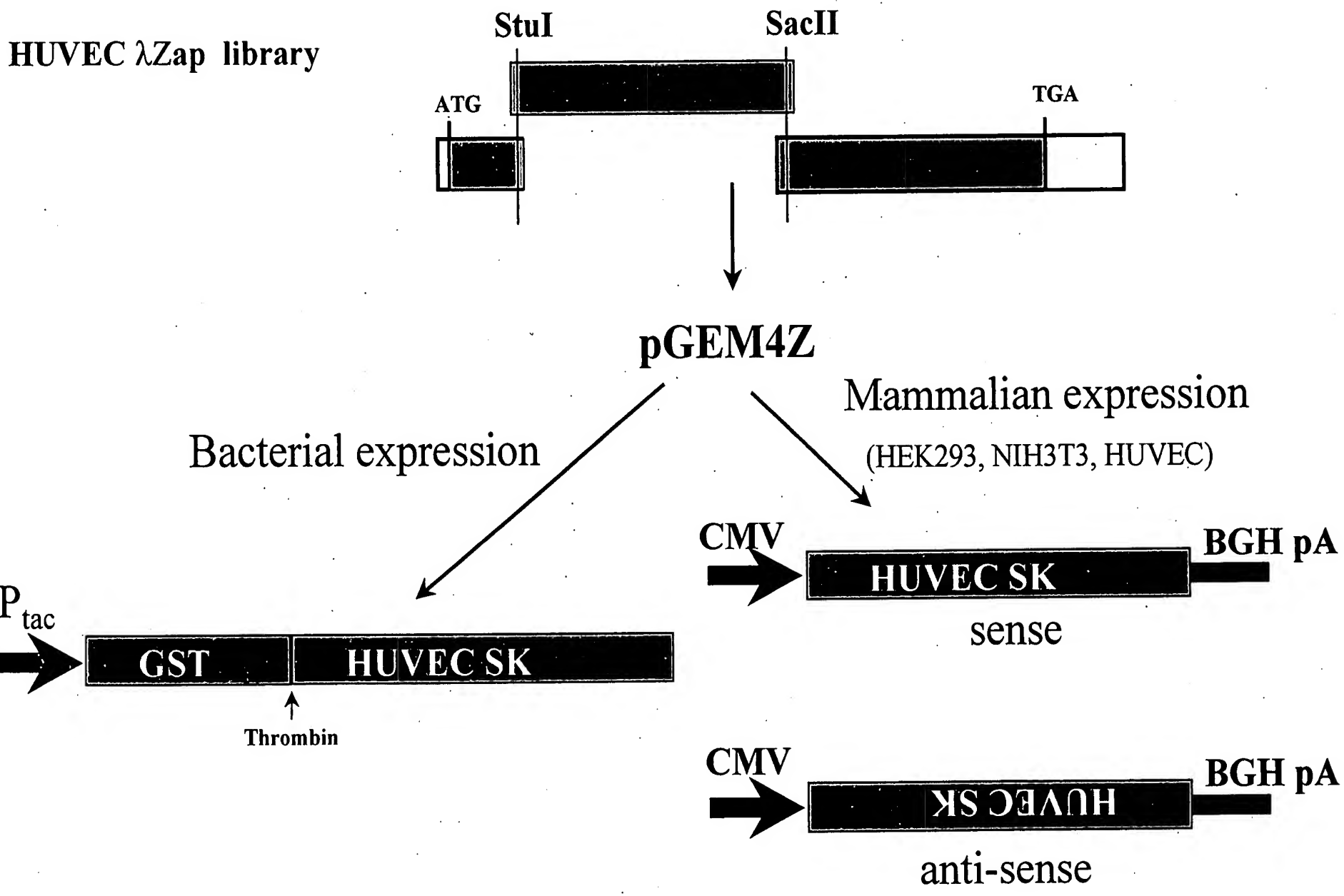


Figure 12.

```
   1                                        M  D  P  A  G  G  P  R  G  V   10
   1 gaattcggcacgaggagccgcgggtcgaggttATGGATCCAGCGGGCGGCCCCCGGGGCG   60

  11   L  P  R  P  C  R  V  L  V  L  L  N  P  R  G  G  K  G  K  A   30
  61 TGCTCCCGCGGCCCTGCCGCGTGCTGGTGCTGCTGAACCCGCGCGGCGGCAAGGGCAAGG  120

  31   L  Q  L  F  R  S  H  V  Q  P  L  L  A  E  A  E  I  S  F  T   50
 121 CCTTGCAGCTCTTCCGGAGTCACGTGCAGCCCCTTTTGGCTGAGGCTGAAATCTCCTTCA  180

  51   L  M  L  T  E  R  R  N  H  A  R  E  L  V  R  S  E  E  L  G   70
 181 CGCTGATGCTCACTGAGCGGCGGAACCACGCGCGGGAGCTGGTGCGGTCGGAGGAGCTGG  240

  71   R  W  D  A  L  V  V  M  S  G  D  G  L  M  H  E  V  V  N  G   90
 241 GCCGCTGGGACGCTCTGGTGGTCATGTCTGGAGACGGGCTGATGCACGAGGTGGTGAACG  300

  91   L  M  E  R  P  D  W  E  T  A  I  Q  K  P  L  C  S  L  P  A  110
 301 GGCTCATGGAGCGGCCTGACTGGGAGACCGCCATCCAGAAGCCCCTGTGTAGCCTCCCAG  360

 111   G  S  G  N  A  L  A  A  S  L  N  H  Y  A  G  Y  E  Q  V  T  130
 361 CAGGCTCTGGCAACGCGCTGGCAGCTTCCTTGAACCATTATGCTGGCTATGAGCAGGTCA  420

 131   N  E  D  L  L  T  N  C  T  L  L  L  C  R  R  L  L  S  P  M  150
 421 CCAATGAAGACCTCCTGACCAACTGCACGCTATTGCTGTGCCGCCGGCTGCTGTCACCCA  480

 151   N  L  L  S  L  H  T  A  S  G  L  R  L  F  S  V  L  S  L  A  170
 481 TGAACCTGCTGTCTCTGCACACGGCTTCGGGGCTGCGCCTCTTCTCTGTGCTCAGCCTGG  540

 171   W  G  F  I  A  D  V  D  L  E  S  E  K  Y  R  R  L  G  E  M  190
 541 CCTGGGGCTTCATTGCTGATGTGGACCTAGAGAGTGAGAAGTATCGGCGTCTGGGGGAGA  600

 191   R  F  T  L  G  T  F  L  R  L  A  A  L  R  T  Y  R  G  R  L  210
 601 TGCGCTTCACTCTGGGCACTTTCCTGCGTCTGGCAGCCTTGCGCACTTACCGCGGCCGAC  660

 201   A  Y  L  P  V  G  R  V  G  S  K  T  P  A  S  P  V  V  V  Q  230
 661 TGGCTTACCTCCCTGTAGGAAGAGTGGGTTCCAAGACACCTGCCTCCCCCGTTGTGGTCC  720

 231   Q  G  P  V  D  A  H  L  V  P  L  E  E  P  V  P  S  H  W  T  250
 721 AGCAGGGCCCGGTAGATGCACACCTTGTGCCACTGGAGGAGCCAGTGCCCTCTCACTGGA  780

 251   V  V  P  D  E  D  F  V  L  V  L  A  L  L  H  S  H  L  G  S  270
 781 CAGTGGTGCCCGACGAGGACTTTGTGCTAGTCCTGGCACTGCTGCACTCGCACCTGGGCA  840

 271   E  M  F  A  A  P  M  G  R  C  A  A  G  V  M  H  L  F  Y  V  290
 841 GTGAGATGTTTGCTGCACCCATGGGCCGCTGTGCAGCTGGCGTCATGCATCTGTTCTACG  900

 291   R  A  G  V  S  R  A  M  L  L  R  L  F  L  A  M  E  K  G  R  310
 901 TGCGGGCGGGAGTGTCTCGTGCCATGCTGCTGCGCCTCTTCCTGGCCATGGAGAAGGGCA  960

 311   H  M  E  Y  E  C  P  Y  L  V  Y  V  P  V  V  A  F  R  L  E  330
 961 GGCATATGGAGTATGAATGCCCCTACTTGGTATATGTGCCCGTGGTCGCCTTCCGCTTGG 1020

 331   P  K  D  G  K  G  M  F  A  V  D  G  E  L  M  V  S  E  A  V  350
1021 AGCCCAAGGATGGGAAAGGTATGTTTGCAGTGGATGGGGAATTGATGGTTAGCGAGGCCG 1080

 351   Q  G  Q  V  H  P  N  Y  F  W  M  V  S  G  C  V  E  P  P  P  370
1081 TGCAGGGCCAGGTGCACCCAAACTACTTCTGGATGGTCAGCGGTTGCGTGGAGCCCCCGC 1140

 371   S  W  K  P  Q  Q  M  P  P  P  E  E  P  L  *                  384
1141 CCAGCTGGAAGCCCCAGCAGATGCCACCGCCAGAAGAGCCCTTATGAtctagagtcgacc 1200

1201 tgcag                                                          1205
```

Figure 13.

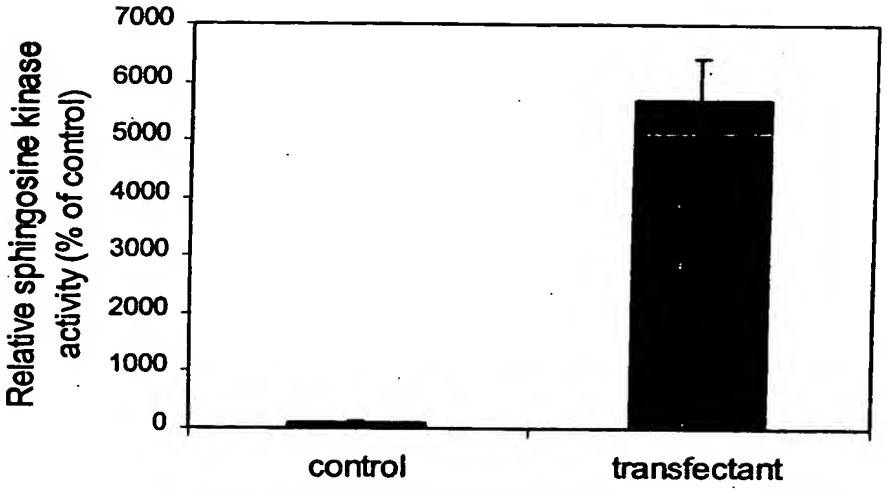

Relative sphingosine kinase activity (% of control)
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
control
transfectant

FIGURE 14

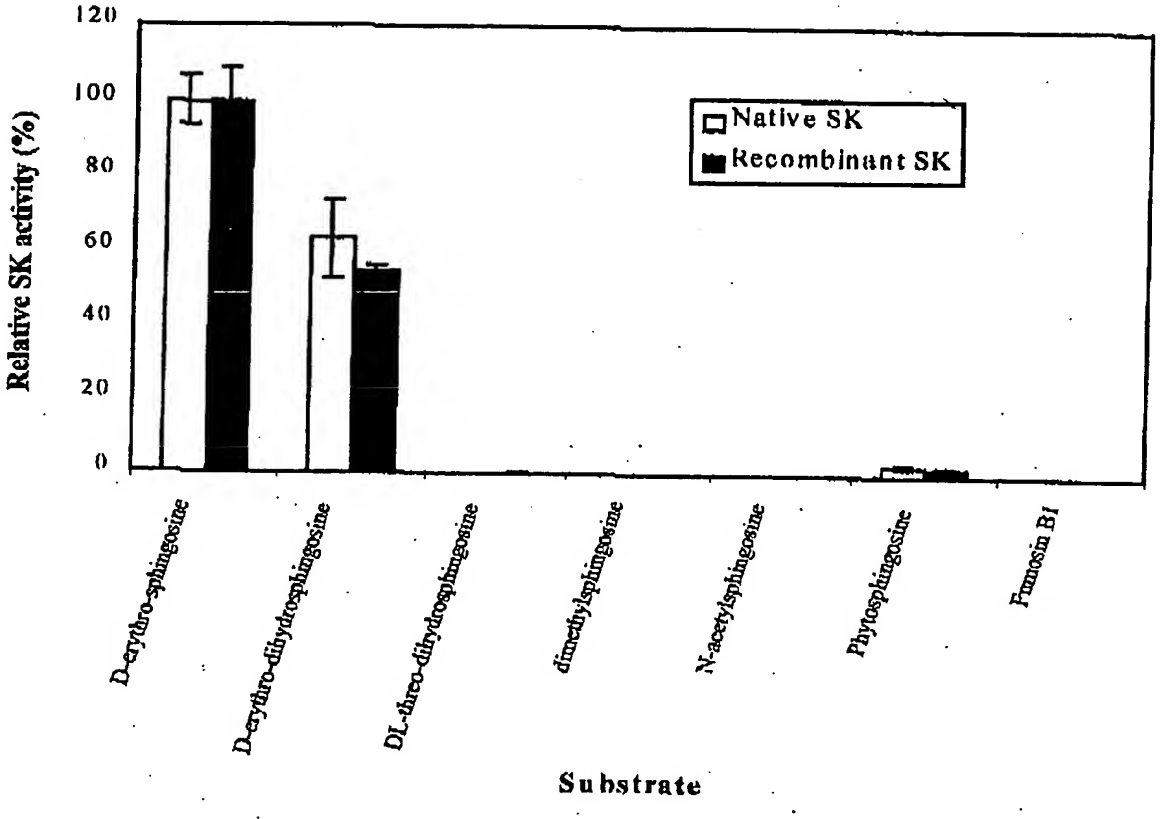

120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Relative SK activity (%)
Native SK
Recombinant SK
D-erythro-sphingosine
D-erythro-dihydrosphingosine
DL-threo-dihydrosphingosine
dimethylsphingosine
N-acetylsphingosine
Phytosphingosine
Fumosin B1
Substrate

FIGURE 15

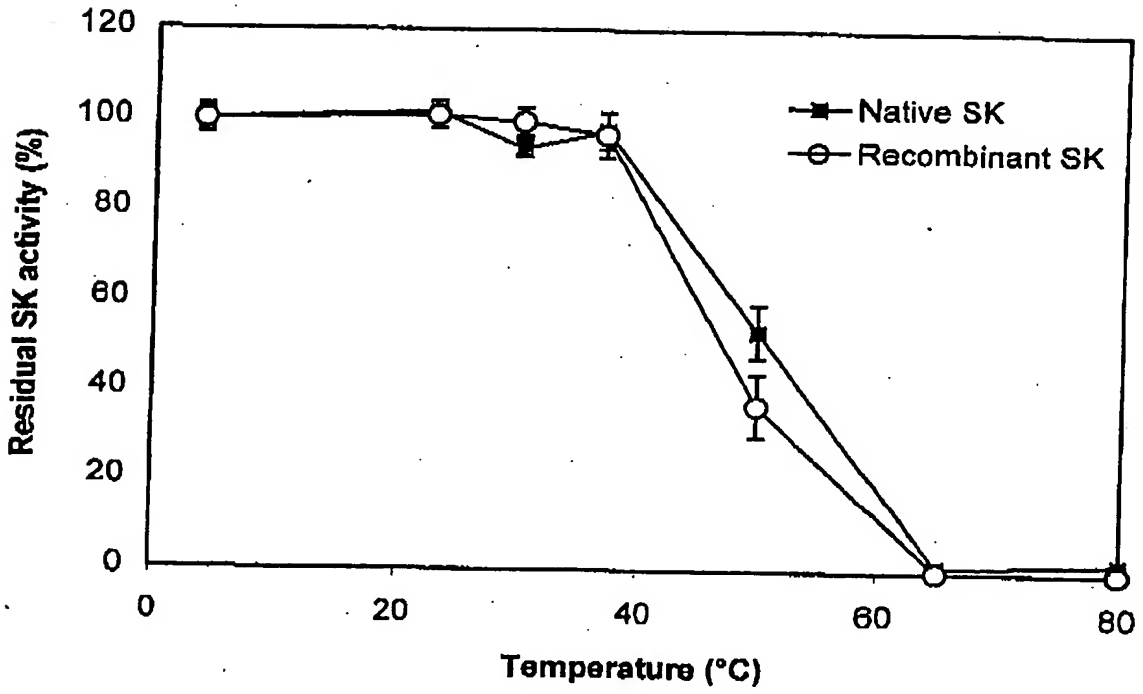

120
100
80
60
40
20
0
0
20
40
60
80
Residual SK activity (%)
Temperature (°C)
Native SK
Recombinant SK

FIGURE 16

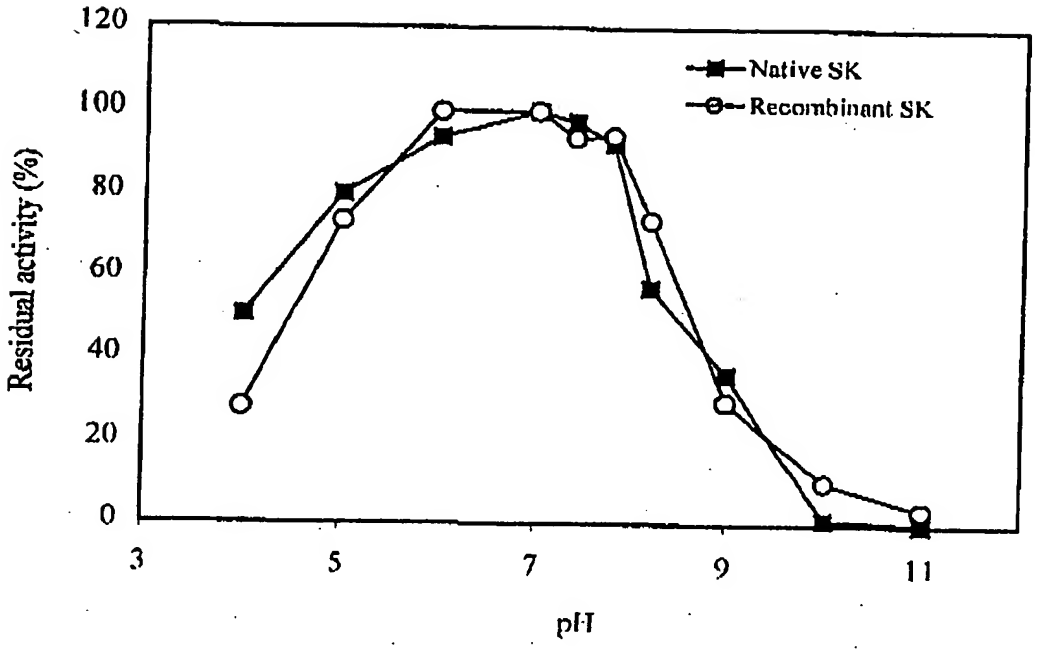

120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Residual activity (%)
3
5
7
9
11
pH
Native SK
Recombinant SK

FIGURE 17

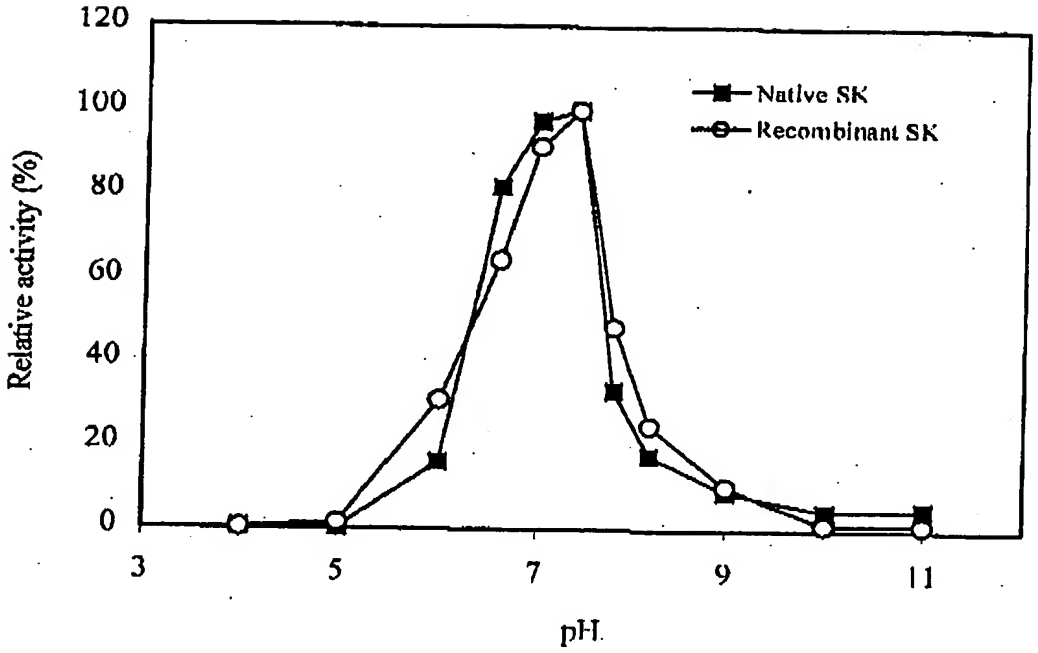

120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Relative activity (%)
3
5
7
9
11
pH
Native SK
Recombinant SK

FIGURE 18

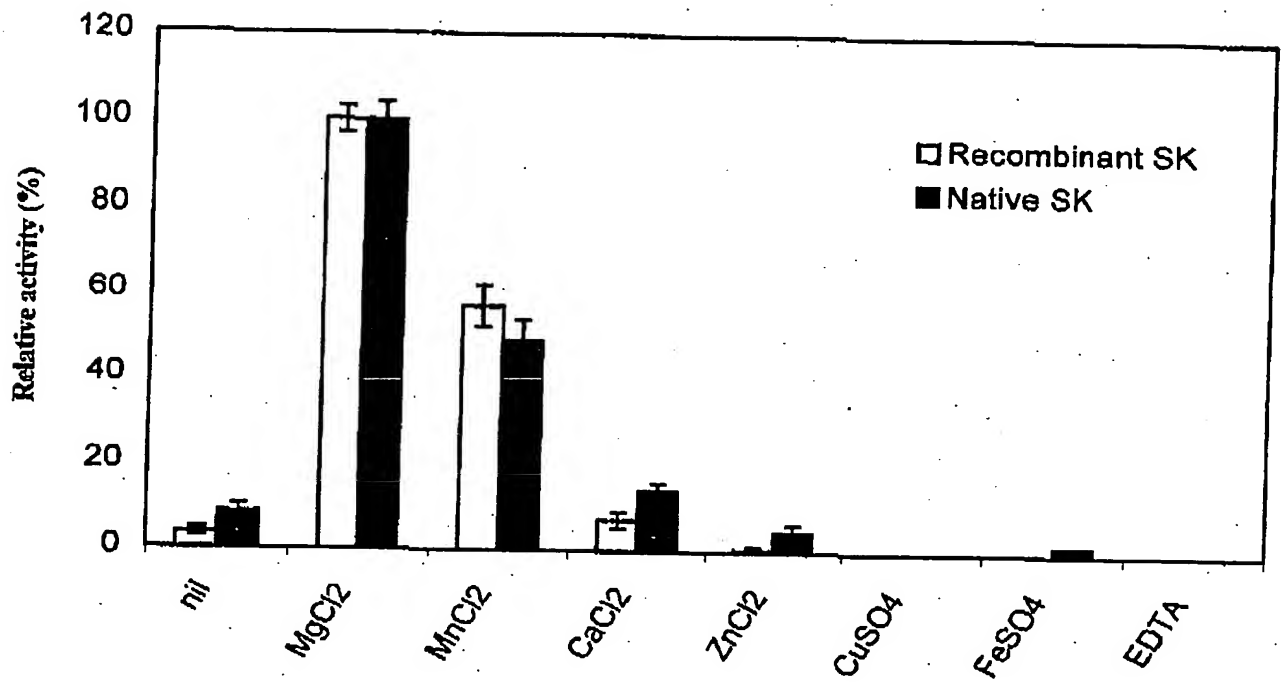
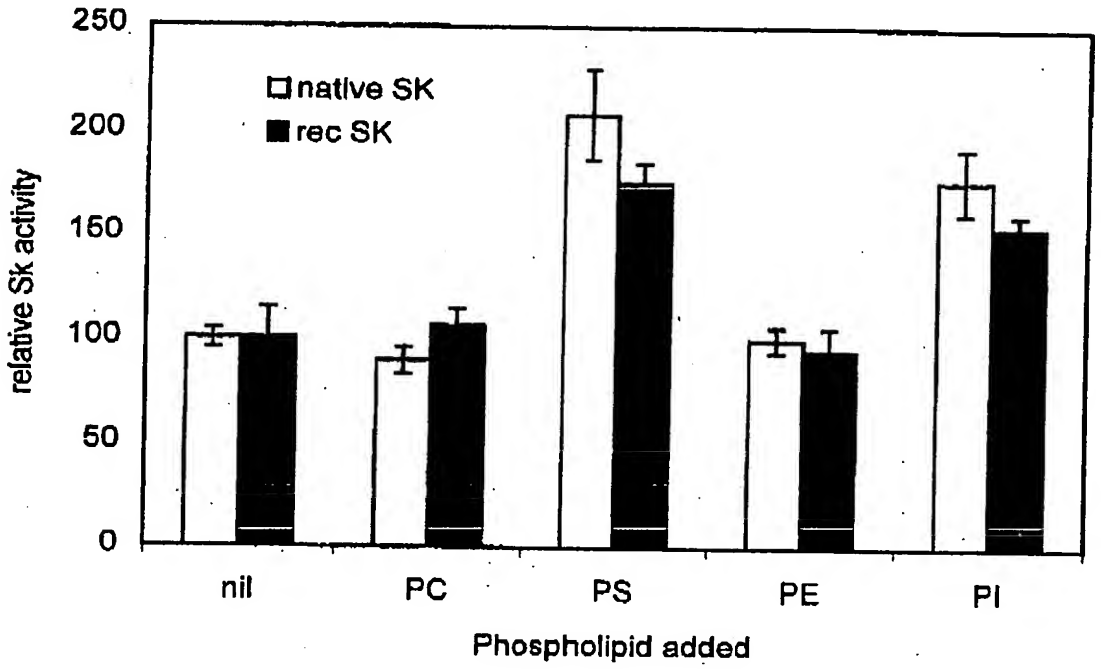

120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Relative activity (%)
Recombinant SK
Native SK
nil
MgCl2
MnCl2
CaCl2
ZnCl2
CuSO4
FeSO4
EDTA

FIGURE 19


250
200
150
100
50
0
native SK
rec SK
relative Sk activity
nil
PC
PS
PE
PI
Phospholipid added